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## Ancient Greek Writers on their Musical Past

Studies in Greek Musical Historiography

Andrew Barker



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## Introduction

I CAN think of no genre of ancient Greek or Latin literature in which there are no allusions to music, and specifically to music of times earlier than that of the writers themselves. Even when such references occur among the witticisms of a comic dramatist or the allegories of a Christian theologian, they all represent themselves, at least in part, as records of historical facts; and they therefore become absorbed into the corpus of material from which modern scholars extract their evidence about ancient music and the course of its history.

It's immediately obvious, however, that not all the statements about music which we find in this enormous collection of texts are equally reliable. Musical allusions in writings of the Roman period may tell us a good deal about the attitudes and assumptions of their authors, but if they include assertions about music and musicians in archaic Sparta or classical Athens, for instance, their value as historical evidence about those distant times is inevitably open to question. It may be very difficult or even impossible to identify the evidence on which the authors themselves were relying, and to pick out the route by which it was transmitted to them down through the centuries, at any stage of which distortions may have been introduced into the tradition. If we cannot reach well-founded conclusions on these issues, we are in no position to decide whether these authors' testimony should be trusted.

It is perhaps less obvious that the same questions arise even when we are dealing with writers much closer in time to the episodes in musical history which they discuss, since in the absence of sound-recordings, personal contact with earlier musical performances will have been lost after the passing of only two or three generations. Hence if someone writing in 350 BC offers information about the music of Pindar, a century or more earlier, we need to ask whether he is drawing conclusions from textual evidence (and if so, what it was), or from his direct experience of Pindar's music as it was re-performed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, or from conversations with older people who had heard it – or whose fathers had heard it – in its early or even its original performances. And no matter which sort of evidence the writer is using, there will be further questions to ask both about its reliability, and about the way in which the writer has interpreted and used it. It is tempting to imagine that writers of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC are bound to have had more secure access to the facts about archaic and early classical music than writers of Roman times, and that their closer cultural connections with Greek life in those periods gave them a better opportunity of understanding them. No doubt both these things are often true; but we should not automatically assume that they are true in every case.

The historical value of passages about music in our texts may be affected by many other factors in addition to these. They may have been deliberately tailored to suit the non-historical purposes of an orator or a philosopher, for instance, or



distorted by an ideological or political bias of which the writer himself may or may not have been conscious. They may represent just one side of an on-going musical controversy; they may be intentionally provocative or satirical or paradoxical, or designed simply to amuse. They may set out their remarks in a potentially misleading way by artificially accommodating them to the conventions of an established literary genre; and authors whose writings seem to be intended as sober histories may present their accounts in a rigid format from which much that we would consider relevant has been excluded, as for instance in the catalogues of 'first discoverers' which are so common in Greek sources.

Issues of these kinds clearly need to be considered when we are assessing the credentials of the ancient writings as evidence for the history of music. But the task of trying to answer the questions they raise is often difficult and intricate, and it can properly be regarded as a substantial field of research in its own right. In the first five chapters of this book I have tried to address the topic in that spirit. I examine the methods by which certain writers have arrived at their conclusions about the music of the past, the purposes of their treatises or shorter discussions and the relations between these works and their other writings, the prejudices and assumptions which they brought to their musical investigations, and other matters of that sort; and I have done so, for the most part, without drawing conclusions about their value to a historian of ancient music. When scholars are trying to assess the value of the relevant sources as the basis for a reconstruction of Greek musical history, perhaps they may find some of my remarks helpful, but even if my analyses are acceptable they would need to be used with some caution. From the fact, if it is one, that there are – for instance – significant prejudices involved in an author's depiction of the past, it does not automatically follow that his evidence is worthless, only that his prejudices should be taken into account in any interpretation of the putatively historical information he presents.

As I said at the beginning, comments about the music of the past appear in Greek writings of every sort. But the scope of this book is limited, most of it to writers whom I call 'musical historians'. I explain what I mean by this expression at the beginning of Chapter 1,<sup>1</sup> and in the main part of the book (Chapters 1-5) I deal only with writers who fall under that description. Hence it seems reasonable to give my principal topic the rather ponderous title 'musical historiography'. But of course I have not been able to consider every Greek historian of the relevant kind. Chapters 2-4 are devoted to a selection of works written in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, most of which survive only in fragmentary form, as quotations and paraphrases in a text dating from the Roman imperial era, the *De musica* insecurely attributed to Plutarch. I examine some of the peculiarities of the *De musica* in Chapter 1. Chapter 5 moves forward into the Hellenistic period, discussing a number of fragmentary sources which again are mostly preserved in a later text, this time the *Deipnosophistai* of Athenaeus. I make a few incidental comments

<sup>1</sup> The explanation is of course to do with my use of the expression when referring to Greek writers. To avoid possible confusion, I have tried not to use it to refer to modern scholars engaged in the study of ancient musical history.

about his work, but have not attempted a full-scale study of it; and there are a considerable number of important Hellenistic and later writers about whom I have said little or nothing.

Chapter 6 moves into different territory. After a few comments on Athenaeus' treatment of certain pieces of lyric poetry, the bulk of it is concerned with musical allusions in comic drama of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries; and here my main focus is on questions about their historical reliability. My excuse for this shift of perspective is that the comic genre is particularly rich in references to music, and modern scholars would lose a great deal if they dismissed its testimony outright, on the grounds that its remarks are playful and often deliberately ridiculous. But it is very risky to take them at face value, and my purpose in discussing a small selection of them is to draw attention to some of the pitfalls which lie in wait for over-enthusiastic and unwary historians of music in this abundant and inviting material. Hellenistic scholars made copious use of the work of the comic dramatists, as we shall see, and in that respect we would be well advised to follow their example. But we should not necessarily imitate their ways of interpreting them. When we are looking at passages of comedy with the eyes of a historian, the course to be steered between the Scylla of naive credulity and the Charybdis of hyperbolic scepticism is often harder to find than the Hellenistic writers seem typically to have supposed.

Readers will notice that the book contains far fewer references to the work of previous scholars than they would normally expect in a study of this kind. This is due mainly to its origin in lectures which were intended to stimulate interest and perhaps controversy, rather than to set out an authoritative position backed up by the weight of established scholarship. For these purposes I thought it best to write, for the most part, on the basis of my own direct engagement with the texts (the occasional passages in which other scholars' publications have played an important part are indicated in the footnotes). When I came to revise the lectures for publication, it would not have been possible to give the book substantial and appropriate bibliographical depth without completely re-writing it, a task which – for the present, at any rate – I am not in a position to undertake.

As I have also tried to make clear, the book makes no attempt to consider the whole range of Greek music-historical writings, nor does it claim to offer a full-scale examination of any of the works it addresses. It is only a preliminary foray into an area which deserves much closer and more sustained attention. I hope it at least gives some idea of the kinds of investigation that might usefully be undertaken in the future.



## 1. Musical History in the Pseudo-Plutarchan *De Musica*

GREEK writers of many different kinds – lyric poets, dramatists, philosophers, scientists, orators and essayists of every description – comment from time to time on episodes in earlier musical history, and they do so for a multitude of different reasons. They may be using these allusions to celebrate the Greek musical tradition, to denounce modern innovations, to support a political, ethical or aesthetic opinion, to claim their own place in the respected tradition or, conversely, to advertise their own originality, and so on. Only rarely can we be sure that they are simply trying to record the historical facts. Recent scholars have shed a good deal of light on some Greek writers' purposes, and on the ideological positions reflected in their allusions to the musical past, especially in connection with the controversies aroused by the so-called 'New Music' of the later 5<sup>th</sup> century; I make a few remarks about texts relevant to these issues in Chapter 3, and comment more extensively on some of them in Chapter 6. But I want to spend most of my time on questions of a different sort; and whereas the authors who have attracted most attention in scholarly literature are well-known poets and philosophers – Pindar, Pratinas, Aristophanes, Pherecrates, Plato, Aristotle and others – I shall try to turn the spotlight on a group of writers who are probably less familiar.

I shall call these writers 'musical historians', though in some cases the title may be misleading. Not all of them devoted whole works, or even large parts of them, to accounts of periods in Greek musical history. They include historians and scholars of other sorts who incorporated passages on the musical past into their writings, and who overtly presented them as contributions to history, not, for instance, as accessories to philosophical argument. Of course their accounts are unlikely to have been purely objective and scientific, conditioned only by a detached examination of factual evidence; careful analysis will almost always reveal the influence of ideological, political or other motives on the ways in which they select, interpret and organize their data. But they are nevertheless historians in so far as they present their writings simply as narratives of the past, and not as ingredients in comic dramas, forensic speeches, treatises in philosophy and the like.

Before we try to unearth any hidden agenda underlying an account that purports to be a historical narrative, we need to analyse very closely the ingredients and the arrangement of the narrative itself. What are the events or episodes in Greek musical history on which it focuses? How does it relate them to one another? Does it pay special attention to particular musical genres and ignore others? Which kinds of evidence does it treat as reliable? Does it explicitly disagree with other accounts, and if it does, what reasons does it use to support its own position? We can investigate all these questions and others of similar sorts without asking why the author in question addressed his subject in the way he did; and it's important that we should do so. It's unwise to start looking for an author's



ideological prejudices or purposes until we have a clear conception of what he actually does.

This probably sounds like a rather simple project, but it comes up against an obstacle right at the start. Greek authors who deliberately set out to write accounts of periods or even short episodes in musical history have not been kindly treated by the prejudices and accidents through which some writings of classical antiquity have been preserved and others have not. In so far as they survive at all, it is only in the form of fragments quoted by later authors, or in reports – which are not always reliable – about what they had said. These isolated fragments seldom allow us to reconstruct, with any confidence, the characteristics of any narrative in which they were originally set. We have just one surviving work that includes an extensive passage representing itself as a musical history, and whose statements are linked to one another clearly enough for its narrative form to be at least partly decipherable. In this one case, then, there is a reasonable chance of finding answers to some of our questions without too much speculative guesswork, even if it gives us insights into the strategies of only a single author. At any rate, it seems the best place to begin.

The work I have in mind is the dialogue *De musica* attributed in the manuscripts to Plutarch. Most modern scholars hold that the attribution is mistaken, and that it was probably written around 200 AD;<sup>1</sup> in any case it was certainly composed long after the archaic and classical periods on which I want mainly to focus. Fortunately, however, its author relies very heavily on information which he found in writings of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, though we don't know whether he had access to copies of the original texts, or was drawing on reports provided by a Hellenistic compiler; and if we proceed with due caution we may be able to detect some significant features of their approaches to musical history as well as his own. But we shall not reach that phase of our project in this chapter.

So far as the *De musica* itself is concerned, modern scholars have usually taken the view that the unknown author was incapable of original thought; he merely paraphrased what his predecessors had said, assembling abbreviated versions of their statements without re-organizing them to fit any coherent plan of his own, and introducing nothing independently except confusion.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is true or partly true; but I want to begin by examining the chapters with which we shall mainly be concerned, Chapters 3–12, to see whether we can make sense of their construction and organization, and of the story they are trying to tell. I suggest that we forget, for a moment, that the writer takes his information from others,

<sup>1</sup> The contrary view, that it was written by Plutarch himself at an early stage in his career, is defended with detailed and interesting arguments in Weil and Reinach (1900), xxiii–xxxi. Despite occasional eccentricities, the introduction and notes in this edition of the dialogue are still among the best available. The introductory essay in Lasserre (1954), by contrast, has little to recommend it. I suspect, however, that no one apart from the editors themselves has ever accepted Weil and Reinach's extensive reorganizations of the text.

<sup>2</sup> 'Excepté dans les parties assez soignées du début et de la fin, l'auteur n'a eu pour objet que de jeter sur le papier, en les soudant tant bien que mal les uns aux autres, les extraits de ses lectures musicologiques' (Weil and Reinach (1900), iv).

and temporarily ignore the possibility that he slavishly followed their methods of research and the ways in which they selected and arranged their materials. Let us imagine, whether we believe it or not, that he was pursuing a definite strategy of his own, and consider these chapters simply as a free-standing, autonomous account of the period in Greek musical history that it outlines. What can we say about the content and form of its narrative?

The two main speakers at the dialogue's fictional feast, Lysias and Soterichus, are responding to the request of their host, Onesicrates, that they should offer their fellow-guests some enlightening speeches on the topic of music. He asks them, at the end of Chapter 2, to explain who was the first person to engage in music, to describe the later discoveries which led to its further development, to discuss people who were particularly eminent in the musical sciences, and to specify the purposes that music can serve. The first two of these tasks seem to invite historical treatment, and it is those that are tackled in the speech of Lysias, in Chapters 3–12.

It's immediately clear that his contribution is intended to have the form of a chronologically ordered narrative, at least in part; and it begins right at the beginning of Greek musical history – or indeed *before* the beginning, as we would understand such things, since the first group of musicians he discusses are figures of myth. Music began, he tells us, with the invention of *kitharōidia* and kitharodic composition – that is, the arts of singing to one's own accompaniment on the kithara and of composing pieces for performance of this sort – and the person who first devised these arts was Amphion, one of the many sons of Zeus. Amphion is followed by Linus of Euboea, Anthes of Anthedon, Pieros of Pieria and Philammon of Delphi, and then by three others, Thamyras, Demodocus and Phemius, who are taken directly from the pages of Homer. To each of the first four he attributes compositions of a particular sort: Amphion was the first composer of *kitharōidia*, Linus composed laments, and so on. To the others he attributes compositions on particular themes, asserting, for instance, that Thamyras composed a piece about the war between the gods and the Titans, and that Phemius composed a song about the return of the heroes from Troy.

I'll come back later to questions about the evidence on which the writer based these assertions. The immediate point is that the musicians in this group belong to myth rather than history, and that although in Greek writings the boundary between mythical and historical people or events is often blurred, no one at any period can have had first-hand experience of these people's compositions, since they never existed. We might suppose that it was possible, in classical or later times, to hear music which they were believed to have composed, and it's true that some surviving compositions were credited to figures whom we would regard as legendary; we shall meet such cases later. But there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that pieces of music still current in classical or later times were thought to have been composed by Amphion or Philammon or Demodocus or any of the others on the list in Chapter 3. The writer nevertheless goes on to make definite statements about the character of their compositions:



The diction of the compositions of the people I have mentioned was not rhythmically disorganized or lacking in metre, but was like that of Stesichorus and the ancient song-composers, who composed *epē* [that is, hexameter verses in the epic mould] and set them to music (1132b-c).

Again, let's not concern ourselves yet about the evidence which the writer thought he could use to support this assertion. What he seems to be doing is to assimilate the pieces attributed to mythical musicians to a very specific form of composition which he finds in the works of Stesichorus and others; and the picture becomes even clearer as we read on.

... Terpander too, a composer of kitharodic *nomoi*, set his own *epē* and those of Homer to music based on each of the *nomoi*, and sang them in competitions ... and in a similar way to Terpander, Clonas, the first person who constructed aulodic *nomoi* and processional (prosodia), was a composer of elegiacs and *epē*. Polymnestus of Colophon, who lived later than Clonas, also used the same forms of composition (1132c).

There can be no doubt here about the writer's intentions. He is identifying the foundation of the Greek musical tradition in one specific musical genre, that of songs which gave a musical setting to poetry composed in epic hexameters, and supplied the song with an instrumental accompaniment. The poetry which the composer set to a melody was sometimes his own and sometimes a passage taken from Homer. Where the accompaniment was provided by the aulos, the form could be that of the elegiac couplet, but the writer evidently treats this, rightly or wrongly, as a closely related variant of verse composed in epic hexameters. He also insists that the first compositions of *nomoi* accompanied by the aulos, those of Clonas, were later than the kitharodic compositions of Terpander; and it becomes clear as the text continues that he treats music involving the aulos as secondary, locating the original and paradigmatic form of Greek music in the genre of *kitharōidia*. That is the genre pioneered by the first musician of all, Amphion, or – when we come to figures whom we would regard as historical – by Terpander, who is the dominant figure in the earlier parts of Lysias' discourse. The writer emphasizes the primacy of *epē* set to music and accompanied by the kithara very strongly again in Chapter 4: Terpander composed not only his *nomoi* but also his kitharodic *prooimia*, 'preludes', in hexameter form; and even Timotheus, the most notorious of the late 5<sup>th</sup>-century innovators, used *epē* as the basis of his kitharodic *nomoi* in the first part of his career – in order, so the writer rather implausibly alleges, to make sure that he would not be too obviously parting company with the ancient musical tradition (1132d-e).

According to this writer, then, the glorious Greek musical tradition was founded on the genre of *kitharōidia*, conceived as poetry in hexameter verse, set to music and sung by a soloist to his own accompaniment on the kithara. In this connection, and that of singing to the aulos, he has also put in the foreground compositions of the kind called *nomoi*; and we need to consider briefly the two rather different ways in which he uses that term. In the first kind of case, a *nomos* attributed to a composer is a particular composition which he composed, and

which he or others performed in one of the competitive musical festivals. Thus we are told that Terpander composed *kitharōidikoi nomoi* and sang them in competitions (1132c), that Timotheus sang his earliest *nomoi* in hexameters (1132e), and so on. But we find a different usage too. When Terpander set poetry to music, he did so *κατὰ νόμον ἕκαστον*, 'on the basis of each of the *nomoi*' (1132c), and in later passages it becomes clear that a *nomos* in this sense is not a particular composition, but a type of composition which composers could recreate in any number of different forms. Composers are also said to have 'used' this or that *nomos* in pieces of their own, which may not themselves be *nomoi*; and this means that they incorporated some of the melodic or rhythmic features of that *nomos* in their own compositions. Similarly, when the writer says that some of the *nomoi* composed by Terpander were pioneered much earlier by Philammon (1133d), he clearly does not mean that Terpander merely replicated his predecessor's work. He means that Terpander created his own compositions, but within a melodic and rhythmic framework that originated in one or other of the *nomoi* of Philammon. Similarly – to abandon the *De musica* for a moment – when Midas of Acragas won the contest at Delphi in 490 BC with his performance of the *Polykephalos nomos*, as recorded in Pindar's *Twelfth Pythian*, he was certainly not re-performing the piece called the *Polykephalos nomos* which was said to have been composed more than a century earlier by Olympus, or according to others by his pupil Crates (1133d-e). Archaic and classical musicians did not re-perform the works of earlier composers at the competitive festivals, as we re-perform Schubert's *Lieder* or Beethoven's symphonies; part of what they were displaying was their own skill in the art of composition. What Midas played at Delphi was a composition of his own, but one that could be recognised as having the essential musical features which characterized a *nomos* of the *Polykephalos* variety.

The writer of the *De musica* very clearly places the *nomos*, as a musical genre, at the heart of the archaic musical tradition – and perhaps of the classical tradition too, though here it is harder to be sure what he intends. The *nomos* is the central topic of six of the ten chapters in Lysias' historical sketch, Chapters 3-8, and we have already noted that the kitharodic *nomos* is represented as the first and most important of its variants. Modern scholars have sometimes taken this picture at face value, repeating as a historical fact that the complex of melodic and rhythmic patterns which characterized each of the *nomoi* – the *Polykephalos nomos*, the *Harmatios nomos* and so on – provided the musical foundations of all or at any rate the great majority of archaic compositions.<sup>1</sup> It is generally assumed that these models were abandoned in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in favour of an approach in which rhythmic and melodic elements were more clearly separated, and specific types of melody and rhythmic sequence were distinguished from the scale-structures and rhythmic elements underlying them. According to this hypothesis, the classification of compositions by reference to the *nomoi* on which they were

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Power (2010), 227-29 (especially the comparison with the Indian *rāga*, p. 228); cf. Nagy (1990), 88 (quoted by Power, 216).



based was replaced by a classification in terms of the scale-systems or patterns of attunement which each composition employed, that is, the *harmoniai* labelled as Dorian, Phrygian and so on, and by a separate classification in terms of the nature and arrangement of their rhythmic components. It seems to me that any account of this sort has to depend very heavily on the approach taken in the *De musica*, and I am not entirely convinced that it is safe to do so. But this is not an issue that concerns us here. At this stage we are trying to explore what the writer of the dialogue actually does, not to comment on his reliability.

The chapters of the *De musica* which deal principally with the *nomoi* divide them into three types, kitharodic *nomoi* for a singer accompanying himself on the kithara (examined principally in Chapters 3-4), aulodic *nomoi* for a singer accompanied by another performer on the auloi (Chapter 5), and auletic *nomoi* for a performer on the auloi alone (Chapters 7-8). Chapter 6 stands a little outside the sequence, though it also contains further information about *kitharōidia*, and I shall return to it later. There is no reference to the fourth type, kitharistic *nomoi* for solo performance on the kithara without a singer. This genre never had a very high profile, and was abandoned at the Pythian festival after a brief experiment; but despite its relatively low status we know from inscriptions and literary sources that it survived in the programmes of other festivals into and after the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> It's surprising that the writer ignores it, and there is nothing in the text that would explain his reasons for doing so. He might have judged that it was simply too unimportant to be mentioned; or perhaps he decided to omit it because he could find no references to it in sources which credited it with sufficient antiquity. That is certainly possible, since it seems to have been a 6<sup>th</sup>-century innovation, developed especially in the Argolid, and unlike the other types of *nomos* it has no roots either in myth or in the misty historical recesses of the 7<sup>th</sup> and earlier centuries.

Let's put that issue aside for the present. In Chapters 3-8 the writer appears to have a clear programme. His general plan is to represent the various types of *nomos*, and especially the kitharodic *nomos*, as the foundation of the ancient Greek musical tradition. His narrative will start from the very earliest composers in this genre, and will go on to provide some details about the identity of the various *nomoi*, their names, their original composers and the chronological relations between them, and the successors of these pioneers down through the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. It will give an outline, in fact, of Greek musical history from its beginnings to the end of what we call the archaic period, focused almost exclusively on the composers of *nomoi*. The writer gives rather little information, unfortunately, about the musical form or content of these *nomoi*, and what he does give is sometimes of questionable value; his assertion, for instance, that the *Trimeles nomos* of Polymnestus and Sacadas was performed by a chorus, and that it had three parts, each in a different *harmonia*, seems improbable and anachronistic and is almost certainly mistaken (1134a-b).

<sup>1</sup> For some details and references see West (1992), 367-68.

One major feature of this musical history is particularly striking. Apart from the isolated allusion to a chorus which I have just mentioned, it says nothing in these chapters about a choral tradition; and though references to choral genres appear from time to time in Chapters 9-10 and again, implicitly, in Chapter 12, the writer makes no attempt to integrate them into a historical narrative. Nor does he provide even a rudimentary sketch of the history of compositions for performance by soloists which were designed for occasions other than the public festivals, the lyric compositions of Sappho, Alcaeus and Anacreon, for example. In so far as he offers a historically organized account at all, it is a history of the archaic *nomos* and of nothing else. We may well wonder why.

But there is a much more immediate problem, as we try to interpret the writer's plan. Although the outline of his intentions in Chapters 3-8 is clear enough, the details of these chapters introduce complications and apparent contradictions which interfere with the coherence of his presentation. Minor difficulties appear already in Chapter 4, but the most serious problems begin with Chapter 5. Here, for the first time, two new heroes of the musical tradition are introduced, Orpheus and Olympus, neither of whom was mentioned in the writer's catalogue of music's founding fathers in Chapter 3. In that connection it is Orpheus whose appearance in Chapter 5 seems particularly troublesome, since according to Chapter 3 the inventor of *kitharōidia*, and indeed of music as a whole, was Amphion the son of Zeus; whereas now this role – at least as it applies to *kitharōidia* – is assigned to Orpheus. The text tells us explicitly that he had no predecessors in this art (1132f). It also puts forward the suggestion that there were composers and performers of *aulōidia* even before the time of Orpheus (1132f-1133a), whereas the earlier passage made it clear that there was no music at all before the original development of *kitharōidia* by Amphion. We might try to evade these difficulties by assuming that the writer recognized that the musicians in his initial list were figures of myth, but regarded Orpheus as properly historical. In that case he might have meant that he had no historically real predecessors. Amphion and the rest of the mythological series would then be irrelevant, and perhaps the idea that in strictly historical terms *aulōidia* came before *kitharōidia* is more or less consistent with the account we have so far been given. But this too creates tensions in his account. Chapters 3-4 seem to take the view that the first great exponent of *kitharōidia* was Terpander, though admittedly they do not say so unambiguously; and yet now that status is assigned to Orpheus, and we are told that Terpander took his music as the model on which he based his own (1132f).

It is perfectly possible, none the less, that the writer thought of Orpheus as a historical figure. Orpheus appears to have two distinct personae in Greek thought in classical and later times. On the one hand he belongs squarely within the world of myth, in which he was the son of a Muse, charmed wild animals with his singing, went on a journey to Hades, and was torn to pieces by infuriated Thracian women, after which his severed head floated away on the waves and landed, still singing, on the coast of Lesbos. On the other hand he is a mystic, musician and poet whose compositions were well known in and after the fifth century and



some of whose words survive. We know now that these compositions were forgeries, and some Greek critics already suspected as much, but they were widely accepted as genuine, and hence as works of an Orpheus who had existed at some time in ordinary human history.

We should therefore be interested in the fact that exactly the same is true of the other musical pioneer introduced in this passage of Chapter 5, the Phrygian aulete Olympus. In the first place he is a pupil of the satyr Marsyas, and hence is associated with an obviously mythological character; it was Marsyas who picked up the auloi discarded by the goddess Athena, taught himself to play them, and rashly challenged Apollo to a musical contest, with disastrous results. We all know that story, and it was frequently repeated throughout antiquity in various different versions. But Olympus was also well known as the composer of pieces of music that were still heard in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, and are mentioned by Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Aristoxenus and others. Two of these compositions, and another that is closely related to them, are analyzed in some detail in the *De musica* itself. Clearly they existed, and if they were composed by Olympus he must have existed too; in so far as we can tell from our sources, he was thought to have lived in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. So he, like Orpheus, has a double profile in the Greek tradition; and at least in the case of Olympus it appears that some writers tried to find a way round the difficulty. Some of them seem to have done so by representing Marsyas himself as an ordinary human being and detaching him altogether from myth; according to their account he was not even the inventor of the auletic art, but learned it from its real originator, his father Hyagnis. That is the version presented at the beginning of Chapter 5, and it reappears in Chapter 7, at 1133e-f. The *De musica* also records what might seem to be an alternative suggestion – which may have come first from Pratinas in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century – that there were two different musicians called Olympus, an 'older' and a 'younger', of whom the older was the pupil of Marsyas; and Pratinas' statement that it was the younger who composed the *Polykephalos nomos* (1133e) may have been meant to imply that the younger was responsible for all the surviving compositions. The older Olympus could then be consigned, along with Marsyas, to the domain of myth. But in fact, whatever Pratinas may have intended, this is not the picture that the *De musica* presents. When it first mentions an older and a younger Olympus (1133d-e), the younger is represented simply as a descendant of the older, and it is the older who is said to have 'brought to Greece the musical [or perhaps 'enharmonic'] *nomoi* which the Greeks now use in the festivals of the gods'. The writer's position on this matter is unimpeachably consistent. Hyagnis, Marsyas and Olympus – or both the older Olympus and the younger, if there were two of them – are all both human and historical; and so too, on my reading of the text, is the original composer of *kitharōidia*, Orpheus. Despite the familiarity of the myths and the 'double personae' of Orpheus and Olympus, there is nothing at all in the *De musica* about satyrs, singing heads and the rest of the mythological paraphernalia. But even when we remove Orpheus and Olympus from myth and locate them in history, it is still hard to find a coherent interpretation of the writer's posi-

tion. Chapters 3-4 give the clear impression that the origins of Greek music lie in *kitharōidia*, and that it is this genre that provided the foundations of the aesthetically admirable forms of music that characterized the archaic tradition. It remains puzzling that these chapters fail to mention Orpheus, who is subsequently depicted as the *prōtos heuretēs*, the 'first inventor' of music of this kind. It also seems strange that in Chapter 5 the writer envisages a scenario in which music for a singer accompanied by the auloi preceded the first compositions of *kitharōidia*; and it seems even stranger, if we look a little further on in the text, that he tells us that it was Olympus, in his purely instrumental compositions for the auloi alone – and by implication not Orpheus or Terpander or any composer of accompanied songs – who 'developed music by introducing something that previously did not exist and was unknown to his predecessors, and so became the founder of the noble Hellenic musical style' (these are the closing statements of Chapter 11, at 1135b).

It's worth noticing another, rather obvious feature that Orpheus and Olympus have in common: neither of them was Greek. Orpheus was a Thracian, and Olympus was a native of Phrygia. The idea that much if not all of the music developed by the Greeks originated elsewhere, and especially in the cultures of Phrygia, Lydia and Thrace, was of course common in classical times. But up to the point at which Olympus and Orpheus appear in the text there has been no suggestion in the *De musica* that the art entered the Greek world from outside; the only allusion to a non-Greek musician before that point is its remark in Chapter 3 about Thamyris the Thracian, and he plays no further part in the story. Indeed the early chapters seem to convey the impression that the Greek musical tradition developed autonomously on the Greek mainland; even the fact that its central character, Terpander, was not a mainland Greek but came to Sparta from Lesbos, far away in the north-east, is not revealed until Chapter 6, and then only by implication. In later chapters of Lysias' speech, by contrast, not only are the Phrygian Olympus and the Thracian Orpheus presented as the original patriarchs of Greek music, but when other important figures are introduced in Chapters 9-10 the writer takes care to specify their places of origin; and none of those who have not been mentioned before is a mainland Greek. Thaletas came from Crete, Xenodamus from the island of Cythera and Xenocritus from Locri in Italy; and the home-town of Polymnestus, who has appeared in earlier chapters, is now firmly identified as Colophon in Lydia, that is, in what is now Turkey. In this respect there is no actual contradiction between the earlier and later chapters, but there is certainly a difference of emphasis. The writer suddenly begins to advertise, rather than to conceal the fact that the musical culture of Greece itself was initially derived from the non-Greek cultures of Phrygia and Thrace, and that its subsequent developments on the mainland were largely inspired by composers and performers from faraway places.

If we abandon for a moment our pretence that the history presented in the *De musica* is a construction independently worked out by the writer himself, we may arrive at the hypothesis that he has tried, not very successfully, to combine blocks



of material derived from at least two different sources whose accounts were mutually incompatible. Broadly speaking, one of them seems to give precedence to *kitharōidia*, while the other gives both chronological and aesthetic priority to music involving the aulos; and one of them tries to present a story focused entirely on the mainland, while the other privileges influences that came to Greece from elsewhere. We shall see in due course that this is almost certainly true, and the chapters on the *nomoi* include other inconsistencies which both complicate and reinforce this interpretation, some of which will be mentioned later. But for the present, let's continue our journey through the text, still clinging to the fiction that the writer has carefully organized his history according to a plan that he himself has designed. It will turn out that when we move on from the discussions of the *nomoi* in Chapters 3-8 into the last four chapters of Lysias' historical exposition, this fiction becomes even harder to sustain than it was before; if the writer had any coherent narrative arrangement in mind, its outlines now become virtually invisible.

The writer's focus shifts abruptly at the beginning of Chapter 9. Up to this point he has guided us, however problematically, through an account of the origins and development of the *nomoi*. But now he turns without any warning or introduction to a different topic and a new cast of characters, explicitly connected with the preceding material only through the roles played in both by Terpander, and secondarily by Polymnestus and Sacadas. The topic is the institution of musical festivals in Sparta, a city which was certainly very prominent in archaic Greek musical culture, but which has so far been mentioned only once, in a casual remark at 1133d. Terpander, we are now told, was responsible for the first *katastasis* of music in Sparta, which evidently means, in the context, that he instituted the oldest of the city's musical festivals, presumably the Carnea. At some later date there was a second *katastasis*, initiated by five other musicians all of whom, as I've said already, had come to Sparta from elsewhere – Thaletas of Gortyn in Crete, Xenodamus of Cythera, Xenocritus of Locri in Italy, Polymnestus of Colophon in Asia Minor, and one musician from the Peloponnese itself, the aulete Sacadas of Argos. We are also told that they prompted the foundation of festivals in two other locations as well, Argos and Arcadia.

The writer says nothing that would explain the connection, if there is one, between these events and the history of the *nomos*. Three of the musicians mentioned, Terpander, Polymnestus and Sacadas, have already appeared as composers of *nomoi* of various sorts; but the others have not; and in the sequel, in which the writer discusses the kinds of music they composed, the works attributed to them are not *nomoi*. There is also a good deal of disagreement about what exactly they were. Thaletas is said to have composed paeans, but the writer adds that some authorities dispute this assertion. Xenodamus is also represented as a composer of paeans, but the writer provides evidence they were not paeans but *hyporchēmata*. Xenocritus composed paeans too, but some people assert that they were not paeans but dithyrambs (1134c-f). No matter what we are to make of these disagreements, the essential point is that the compositions with which they are credited by any of these squabbling authorities are all pieces for choral perfor-

mance. Nothing we are told in the *De musica* allows us to place choral genres of these sorts in any chronological, stylistic or other relation to the *nomoi*, or to anything else that has previously been mentioned. Apart from the bizarre assertion in Chapter 8 that the *Trimelēs nomos* of Sacadas was performed by a chorus, choral music has not previously been mentioned at all; and despite its very significant role in Greek musical culture, after these brief comments in Chapters 9 and 10 it again disappears from Lysias' account.

We should pause for a moment, however, to consider the disagreements recorded in these chapters. Differing views about particular issues have been mentioned in earlier parts of the *De musica*, but none of them is to do with the genre to which a particular composer's works belong. We have been told, for instance, that the Arcadians and the Boeotians made rival claims about Clonas – the Arcadians said that he came from Tegea while the Boeotians insisted that he was a native of Thebes (1133a); that according to certain people, whose view is evidently unorthodox, some of Terpander's *nomoi* had originally been composed by Philammon (1133b); that some people wrongly suppose that Hipponax was a contemporary of Terpander – a view that the writer explicitly rejects, citing evidence in his support (1133d); and so on. The disputes in Chapters 9-10 have a very different profile, and one that suggests an approach with a more scholarly or even philosophically oriented agenda, devoted to the task of classifying compositions by genre. Should Xenocritus' compositions be regarded as paeans or as dithyrambs, and by what criteria? Should those of Xenodamus be treated as paeans or as *hyporchēmata*, that is, as songs designed to accompany dancing? In the latter case the writer takes the trouble to confirm that there really is a difference between pieces of these two sorts, citing as evidence the fact that Pindar composed some works classified under one of these headings and some classified under the other (1134c-d). The earlier chapters offer plenty of opportunities for discussing similar problems of classification, but no such discussions appear; and this is yet another indication that the writer is trying to accommodate several different types of approach to musical history.

Chapter 11 abandons this new agenda, and it also abandons the topic of choral music. It is wholly devoted to the aulete Olympus, and in particular to the form of composition, the *spondeion*, in which he is said to have pioneered the enharmonic genus of melody; and at the end of the chapter this type of melody is represented as the foundation of everything that is best in the Greek musical tradition. From Chapter 5 onwards there have been a number of indications that Olympus was the primary source of characteristically Greek music of the most admirable sort, but now it is stated explicitly. Amphion, Terpander and even Orpheus disappear into the background. That is the essential point that we need to register at present, and at this stage I shall not say anything about the details of this unusually long chapter, whose content, as the writer tells us, comes from a work of Aristoxenus. I shall say more about it when we turn to Aristoxenus' writings in my fourth chapter. For now we need only take note of the fact that the position adopted in Chapter 11 fits tolerably well with the agenda of Chapter 5



and Chapters 7-8, but very uncomfortably with that of Chapters 3-4 and Chapter 6. It has no real connection with the excursus on festivals and choral music in Chapters 9-10, but the writer may perhaps have some slight excuse for developing his picture of Olympus at this point. A remark in Chapter 10, where Thaletas is said to have drawn on Olympus' compositions for certain rhythmic features of his works (1134e), provides him with a slender thread to link that passage with the discussion of the *spondeion* in Chapter 11.

One very short chapter of Lysias' historical exposition remains, Chapter 12, which presents itself as an account of the early composers' innovations in rhythm. It begins by saying that there are things to be said on this topic, since these composers devised several new genera and species of rhythm, adding that they also made new contributions to melodic and rhythmic composition, *melopoiia* and *rhythmopoiia* – that is, to the ways in which they used and combined melodic and rhythmic elements in the construction of particular pieces of music. It is not at all surprising that the writer thought that these developments deserved to be discussed. But the chapter has at least three strange features. One is that in fact he tells us nothing about these innovations. All he does is to mention composers who made contributions of the sorts he has in mind without saying what they were, and to repeat in each case that their innovations did not involve any deviation from the 'noble style', the *kalos typos*, that he attributes to the music of archaic times. Secondly, he ends by saying that it was composers such as Crexus, Timotheus, Philoxenus and others – that is, musicians of the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and the early 4<sup>th</sup> – who introduced coarseness and vulgarity into music and abandoned the solemn simplicity of the ancient tradition. This is a theme that is familiar from many other sources, but here it seems out of place; the writer has been dealing with musicians of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the early 6<sup>th</sup>, and now jumps to a contrast between them and composers of the late 5<sup>th</sup>, leaving at least a hundred years of musical history untouched. Thus a chapter which announces itself as a study of rhythmic innovations in fact says nothing about them, and it leaves an enormous gap between one phase of Greek musical history and another.

The third strange feature of this chapter also arises from the way in which it introduces its topic: 'There is also something to be said about rhythms ...'. The statement seems to suggest that nothing has been said about this matter before, apparently implying that the focus has so far been only on the melodic features of archaic compositions. But that is by no means true. Apart from the study of Olympus' *spondeion* in Chapter 11, the writer has given very few details about the ancient melodies, and has made several assertions about the rhythms that their composers employed. The early composers of *nomoi* restricted themselves to the epic hexameter and the elegiac couplet; Stesichorus borrowed the dactylic rhythm from the *Orthios nomos*; Thaletas followed the example of Olympus by using paeonic and cretic rhythms, and so on. When he announces rhythmic developments as a new topic at the beginning of Chapter 12, the writer seems to forget that he has engaged with this subject before, and in much more significant detail than he now provides.

The final chapter of Lysias' speech is a brief peroration which we need not consider. We have found that his account of musical history begins with a fairly intelligible though very restricted agenda, but that it rapidly involves itself in contradictions, abrupt changes of direction, uncertainties about the origins of the tradition, unexpected shifts in perspective and many other less prominent but troublesome inconsistencies. The fiction with which we have been working, that the writer has mapped out a clear plan which will govern his historical narrative, turns out to be hopelessly unsustainable, and we shall have to abandon it. In the next chapter I shall try to reconsider the material from a more promising angle.



## 2. Heraclides of Pontus and Glaucus of Rhegium<sup>1</sup>

WE are now going to jettison the implausible hypothesis that the writer of the *De musica* designed his contribution to musical history according to an intelligible plan of his own. The writer is best thought of not as a historian but as a compiler, who excerpted passages – sometimes quite long ones – from the works of previous authorities, paraphrased and abbreviated them to fit the space of Lysias' relatively short speech, and put them together as best he could. We might compare his work with that of certain modern students in schools and universities who try to construct essays entirely from bits and pieces copied and pasted from the internet. Like many of them, he fails to remould and organize the passages he has borrowed so as to integrate them into an argument or a narrative with a continuous thread; he jumps unexpectedly from one topic to another, probably because he has cut out passages in the original writers' discussions that would have bridged the gaps which he leaves; he places mutually incompatible representations of history side by side, apparently without noticing the obtrusive inconsistencies; and – at a slightly more abstract level – he seems unaware that different parts of his text display different methodological approaches, and perhaps contrasting ideological commitments too.

But the resulting confusion may give us an opportunity to identify and compare significant characteristics of the various music-historical works from which he has compiled his text, which might have been much more difficult if he had more intelligently adapted his materials, smoothed out the inconsistencies and organized the whole account more coherently. Since he has not, and the divergences between one passage and another have not been erased, we may be able to pick out groups of such passages which seem to fit consistently with one another, and distinguish them from other groups with which they cannot coherently be associated. In this way we can work towards an estimate of the number of different sources from which he has borrowed, and say something about their distinguishing features. And since he mentions at least some of the names of the authors whose writings he uses, we may be able to assign some of these features to the works of individual musical historians.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally thought that the writer used only a small number of earlier texts, and that the main bulk of the dialogue is based on works by just two late 4<sup>th</sup>-century authors, Heraclides of Pontus and Aristoxenus of Tarentum. More specifically, scholars have usually agreed that it is Heraclides who provides the material

<sup>1</sup> I have previously commented on Heraclides (and briefly on Glaucus) in Barker (2009), 273–98. That essay addresses some of the issues considered in this volume, but also some others which I have not revisited here.

<sup>2</sup> The author is much more punctilious (as is noted by Weil and Reinach (1900), v–vi) in naming the sources mentioned by the historians on whose works he draws than in identifying the historians themselves, and indicating the extent of the passages borrowed from each of them.



for most of the part we have been examining, Chapters 3-12, the main exception being Chapter 11, which is explicitly credited to Aristoxenus. This diagnosis is probably correct, at least in so far as Chapters 3-12 are concerned, but it is not something we should simply take for granted; we should at least keep open the possibility that we may be hearing the echoes of other voices from the classical period, as well as those of Heraclides and Aristoxenus. We should notice, for instance, that by no means all or even most of the material in these chapters is attributed to Heraclides by name; in fact he is explicitly mentioned only once, early in Chapter 3. Then if we want to argue that he is responsible for most of the material in the rest of Lysias' speech as well, we need to find good reasons for our conclusion.

So we must start again at the beginning, that is, in Chapter 3, and see what we can discover. Even before we come to the historical material, the uncertainties I've just mentioned are encouraged by Lysias' introduction to his speech. He tells us that many people have tried to answer the questions that Onesicrates has asked. Most of the Platonists and the best of the Peripatetics have done so, he says, and 'have composed treatises on the ancient music and its corruption in their own times'; so too have many *grammatikoi* (roughly equivalent to our 'philologists') and harmonic theorists. He adds that there is a great deal of disagreement between them. Perhaps this should be construed as a way of warning us that there will be inconsistencies in the account he is about to present – and there certainly are, as we have seen – and explaining that these are due to the fact that he will be drawing on the work of a substantial number of different writers with conflicting opinions. In that case there must be additional doubts about the strategy of attributing almost everything to Heraclides and Aristoxenus.

We seem to be on safe ground, however, in the first stage of the historical discussion, that is, in Chapter 3, and we can be fairly confident about almost the whole of Chapter 4. Heraclides is named right at the start; it was he who recorded that the first kind of music to be developed was *kitharōidia*, and that its original composer and performer was Amphion the son of Zeus (1131f). The compiler also names the work in which this information appeared and the source from which Heraclides took his evidence for it; I shall come back to those in a moment. The question we need to ask, then, is how much of the next part of the text is also derived from Heraclides, since we can hardly consider the characteristics of his work until that has been established.

The first step towards answering that question poses no serious problems. Heraclides is not explicitly mentioned again, but the fact that all the rest of Chapter 3 is presented in indirect speech shows that here, at least, the writer is continuing to report what he said. We cannot be completely sure that he is still drawing on the same source in Chapter 4, where the indirect form of expression is abandoned, but it seems very likely; the final part of Chapter 3 introduces Terpander as a composer of kitharodic *nomoi*, and Clonas and Polymnestus as composers of aulodic *nomoi*, and Chapter 4 is largely occupied with further details about these composers and themes.

Here, then, we have a quite extensive body of material that can be attributed to Heraclides with reasonable confidence. Does it continue further, beyond Chapter 4? But before we address that question I want to look back at the title of the work from which his contributions were taken. In the Greek of the manuscripts it is recorded as *Συναγωγή τῶν ἐν μουσικῇ*, which means 'Collection of [unspecified items] in music'. In this form the title seems incomplete – what are the items of which it is a 'collection'? – and though in the past I have taken the view that it is intelligible as it stands, I now think that scholars who have supplemented it are probably right. The original title may have been something like 'Collection of people who were eminent in music' or perhaps 'Collection of discoveries in music'. But in any case we need to ask what Heraclides meant by calling it a 'collection'. It might be taken to imply that he intended it as nothing more than a 'data-base' of separate bits of information, not linked together according to any particular plan; it would be a kind of encyclopaedia in which scholars could find assorted facts connected with the musical past. If that were the case it would be pointless to examine it in the hope of discovering his own conception of musical history.

So what is really meant by calling the work a *συναγωγή*? We can reach a reasonably secure answer to this question by reviewing briefly the nature of other works from around the time of Heraclides whose titles also describe them as *συναγχαί*. The earliest we know of was written by the sophist Hippias in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century; so far as our evidence goes, its title was simply *Συναγωγή*, and did not reveal what it was a 'collection' of. But we have a quotation, probably from its introduction, which gives some hints about its contents. It is preserved by Clement of Alexandria in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (*Strom.* vi. 15. 1, p. 434. 21 Stählin = *FGRH* 6 F 4).

Let me cite Hippias the sophist from Elis, who says this. 'Some of these things were said by Orpheus, perhaps, some by Musaeus, ... some by Hesiod, some by Homer, some by other poets and some in prose writings, some by Greeks and some by *barbaroi*. But by putting together, from all of these, the most important and those that are akin to one another (*ὁμόφυλα*), I am going to create this new and multiform kind of *logos*'.

Hippias is obviously boasting about the novelty and the wide range of the work he is introducing, and he explains that it will contain a selection of the most significant things said by writers of all sorts in the past. The diversity of its sources suggests that the topics it addressed were also of many different kinds. But Hippias does not seem to mean that it is just a medley of quotations, assembled in random order and not linked by unifying themes. He proposes to tell us what they said – that is, to convey the sense of their contributions – and he is going to arrange them in a way that brings out their connections with one another. That, at least, is how I interpret his statement that passages which are *ὁμόφυλα*, literally 'of the same race', will be 'put together'; he means that they will be set side by side in the same part of his work. The fact that he did not simply quote them, but presented a version of what they said in his own words, is confirmed by the way in which Athenaeus refers to a passage of the work (*Ath.* 608f = *FGRH* 6 F 3).



Among women who became famous for their beauty was Thargelia the Milesian, who was married to fourteen men, and was not only very beautiful to look at but also very intelligent, as Hippias the sophist says in the work called *Συναγωγή*.

Perhaps Hippias included this in a section of his work devoted to beautiful women; but the main point is that Athenaeus attributes the story to Hippias, and not to some earlier writer whom Hippias had quoted. Whatever the scope of his *Συναγωγή* may have been, he evidently presented it as a work that he himself had composed, while drawing on earlier writings for his evidence.

By the time of Heraclides the *συναγωγή* genre was well established, and was particularly prominent in the works of Aristotle and his followers. In addition to the well-known 'Collection of constitutions', of which the surviving *Athēnaiōn Politeia* is one, there are, for instance, two *τεχνῶν συναγωγαί* attributed, probably wrongly, to Aristotle. They were compendia of the rhetorical techniques formulated and classified in handbooks for orators since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and the surviving excerpts encourage the view that these *συναγωγαί* did not just record the rules laid down in the handbooks, but organized them and discussed their merits. The same is clearly true of the *Athēnaiōn Politeia*, which owes its arrangement and various features of its content to its author's interpretation and treatment of his sources. Again, according to Diogenes Laertius, Theophrastus wrote at least six works called *συναγωγαί*; and although the treatise which we normally refer to as his *Physikōn Doxai* or *Physicorum Opiniones*, 'Opinions of the Natural Scientists', is not called a *συναγωγή* by ancient authorities, it can confidently be placed in the same category. Theophrastus very rarely quotes directly from the authors whose opinions he records. He classifies his predecessors' theories in accordance with his own criteria; he presents his own interpretation of what they had said on a specific topic, in his own late 4<sup>th</sup>-century terminology; and he adds substantial and sometimes critical comments of his own. In short, Theophrastus has put a good deal of himself into what purports to be a record of earlier writers' opinions, representing them through his own interpretations, his own system of organization, his own terminology and his own assessment of their merits and defects. Much the same could be said of a great many later writers.<sup>1</sup>

We can therefore be fairly sure that Heraclides' *Συναγωγή* was not just a collection of passages from other people's writings. The work explicitly recorded, and in that sense 'collected', the opinions of earlier writers, but it was presented in his own words and in an arrangement which he himself had chosen, assembling the scattered pieces of information that he had collected into a chronologically ordered history. In some cases he tells us exactly where he found the reports he was using. Thus in the passage from which I began, early in Chapter 3, we hear that Heraclides took his statements about Amphion and the origins of music from 'the document preserved in Sicily, which enabled him to name the priestesses in Argos and the composers and musicians' (1132a). This 'document' (*ἀνα-*

*γραφῆ*), mentioned again in Chapter 8, at 1134b, was probably inscribed in stone. It evidently stood in some close relation to records kept in the temple of Hera at Argos; and the sequence of Argive priestesses which they recorded gave a basis for establishing the chronology of the other people and events that it mentioned. The statement in Chapter 3 indicates that Heraclides specified the *ἀναγραφῆ* as his source, and included the names of the priestesses – though the writer of the *De musica* has omitted them – as well as those of the composers and musicians. In my third chapter I shall say more about this inscription, and about the route by which its contents reached Heraclides; it turns out to play a very significant part in the musical historiography of both the classical and later periods.

Now the material which certainly comes from Heraclides, Chapter 3, includes the whole of the catalogue of mythical musicians, together with the statements telling us that their kitharodic compositions were musical settings of poetry in epic hexameters (or sometimes in elegiacs, in cases where they were pieces for a singer accompanied by the aulos). But it also introduces two of the principal types of *nomos* and the composers who pioneered them, and the fact that these themes continue without a significant break into Chapter 4 suggests that the whole of the following sequence of chapters on the *nomoi* is also based on Heraclides' work, as most modern scholars suppose.<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis gains support from the appearance of the second allusion to the Sicyonian *ἀναγραφῆ* at the end of Chapter 8, that is, right at the end of the main block of chapters devoted to the *nomos*. Heraclides, we may conclude, gave the *nomos* a very prominent role in his *Συναγωγή*, which is reflected in the extensive treatment of this genre in Chapters 3-5 and 7-8 of the *De musica* and in parts of Chapter 10. In that case a close examination of these chapters should be able to give us some insights into his treatment of musical history.

But as we saw in the previous chapter, any attempt to ascribe all this material to the same author will run into difficulties. At the point where difficulties begin, with the first of the two allusions to composers of *aulōidia* who came before the foundation of the kitharodic tradition (1132e-f), the allusion is in fact attributed to a different writer, Glaucus of Rhegium, who lived in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century and is the earliest musical historian of whom we know anything at all. His remarks appeared, we are told, in a work called *On the ancient poets and musicians*. It is also Glaucus who introduces, a few lines later, the two major characters who have not so far been mentioned, Orpheus and Olympus, and represents them as the original patriarchs of the two main strands of the Greek tradition. His starting-point is therefore entirely different from the one that Heraclides adopted in Chapter 3.

So too, it appears, are the methods of historical research that he uses. As far as we can tell, Heraclides relied exclusively on statements preserved in writing – which occasionally are public inscriptions, as we have seen, but in most cases came from poets of the archaic and early classical periods. A remark about the

<sup>1</sup> For another, rather intricate argument in favour of attributing Chapter 4 to Heraclides, see Weil and Reinach (1900), vii-viii.

<sup>1</sup> On *συναγωγαί* and related kinds of work see Zhmud (2006), 49-51.



*nomoi* of Polymnestus, at the beginning of Chapter 10, explicitly indicates his policy of relying on written evidence rather than on investigations of other kinds; and it also shows that he tried to base his conclusions, wherever he could, on *ancient* writings – that is, on writings as close as possible to the period of the musicians they discuss. Polymnestus too composed aulodic *nomoi*. But whether he used the *Orthios nomos* in composing his melodies, as the *harmonikoi* assert, we cannot say for certain; for the ancient writers (οἱ ἀρχαῖοι) said nothing about this matter' (1134d).

I do not think that Heraclides dismisses the statements of the *harmonikoi* just because they are not 'ancient' enough. A *harmonikos* was a particular kind of musical specialist, one who devoted himself to the study of structures such as scales and systems of attunement, and tried to analyse the forms they take in the compositions and performances of musicians themselves. We needn't examine their methods in detail here; the crucial point is that they relied on the evidence of their own ears and their own studies of pieces which they heard being performed, and not on statements in earlier written sources. In the course of his own contribution to work of this sort, the *Elementa harmonica*, Aristoxenus applies the term *harmonikos* in this sense to his empirically-minded predecessors; and it is clear from his testimony, together with that of Plato and others,<sup>1</sup> that quasi-scientific work of this sort was already going on in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Then if these people based their conclusions about Polymnestus on studies of the kind that the designation *harmonikos* indicates, what Heraclides is rejecting is the practice of extracting conclusions about 'ancient' musicians from the analysis of compositions which were attributed to them in the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and whose characteristics the *harmonikoi* inferred from their performances by musicians of that period.

This tells us something about Heraclides' historical methods; and it is also relevant, for a different reason, in connection with those of Glaucus – not because he rejected the approach of the *harmonikoi*, but because he adopted it himself. In every passage where the *De musica* names Glaucus explicitly as its source, we find that he makes statements which relate the musical style of a composer, or the elements from which he constructed his compositions, to those involved in the music of one or more other composers. The music of Orpheus is not at all like that of the early composers of *aulōidia* (1132f); Stesichorus did not model his music on that of Orpheus or Terpander or Archilochus or Thaletas, but on that of Olympus, and he used elements borrowed from the *Harmatios nomos* 'and the form that proceeds through dactyls (τῷ κατὰ δάκτυλον εἶδει)' (1133f); Thaletas modelled his music on that of Archilochus but developed it in ways that Archilochus had not, and included rhythmic ingredients which he took from the work of Olympus (1134d-e). Glaucus cannot have extracted these pieces of information from texts of an earlier period, in the manner of Heraclides; almost all relevant writers be-

<sup>1</sup> See especially Plat. *Resp.* 531a-b, where the theorists in question are those whose activities are described by Glaucon, and who, Socrates says, are not the ones he has in mind. For discussion of the pre-Aristoxenian *harmonikoi* see Barker (2007), 33-104.

fore his time were poets, and it is inconceivable that they included such technical details as these. He must have reached his conclusions either on the basis of his own study of music that he actually heard, or on analyses which he took from the work of contemporary *harmonikoi*. In either case his conception of the methods by which research in musical history can best be pursued is radically different from that of Heraclides.

Another of the inconsistencies which we have noticed in the *De musica*'s account can also be linked to a difference between the histories presented by Heraclides and by Glaucus. For Heraclides, as we have seen, the primary and original form of Greek music is *kitharōidia*, whether it is traced back to the mythical Amphion or to the historical Terpander. Glaucus, by contrast, gives pride of place to the aulos tradition. It is Glaucus who suggests that there were composers of *aulōidia* before the string-playing tradition even began; it is he who introduces the figure of the archetypal aulete Olympus; and the two technically detailed passages I have just mentioned lay heavy emphasis – in a distinctly controversial way – on the importance of Olympus and his aulos-music as an influence on the music of composers whose instrument of choice was the kithara. Thus Glaucus and Heraclides adopt diametrically opposite positions both about the methods which a musical historian should use, and about the origins and central features of the archaic Greek musical tradition.

I said earlier that we have reasonable grounds for thinking that most of the material in the chapters concerned with the *nomoi* was taken from the *Collection* of Heraclides. But in the light of the points we have now considered, this view encounters serious difficulties when we come to Chapters 7-8, which seem to be presented as discussions of the auletic *nomoi*, that is, *nomoi* to be performed on the auloi alone, without any contribution from a singer. Chapter 7 purports to be concerned with pieces of this sort – the writer begins the chapter by saying that this is the topic to which he will now turn – but it has at least two features which raise doubts about assigning it to Heraclides. First, it is devoted entirely to Olympus, who is not included in Heraclides' initial catalogue of early musicians, and is introduced into the *De musica* only through the medium of Glaucus. Glaucus is indeed mentioned, towards the end of the chapter, as the authority who confirms the attribution of one of the auletic *nomoi* to Olympus; and it is here that the writer inserts Glaucus' claims about the relation between Olympus and Stesichorus. This raises the suspicion that the chapter as a whole is based largely on statements taken from Glaucus.

Secondly, the chapter does not seem to follow the pattern of the passages on the kitharodic and aulodic *nomoi*, in so far as we can detect one. They are devoted mainly to identifying the earliest composers in these genres and putting them in chronological order, listing the names of the *nomoi* for which they were responsible, and emphasizing the noble simplicity of their compositions, with special reference to their use of rhythms derived from the epic hexameter. Chapter 7 does very little of this sort. The only composer of auletic *nomoi* whom it mentions is Olympus; it provides no list of such *nomoi* and names only two of them, the



Polykephalos and the *Harmatios*, with an incidental allusion to a third, the *Orthios nomos*, in the passage about Stesichorus; and a substantial amount of it is devoted to Olympus' personal background and to the distinction which some writers draw between an older Olympus and a younger. It is hard to interpret it as an account of the auletic *nomoi* parallel to those of the other two types.

Chapter 8 is even more puzzling. It seems to be continuing with the same topic, though it is hard to be sure; its first statement is simply that there is another ancient *nomos* called *Kradias*. Although it does not describe it directly as auletic, we can gather this from the assertion that immediately follows, attributed to Hipponax, that Mimnermus performed this *nomos* on the auloi, ἀλῆσαι. But the next comment confuses the picture; 'for to begin with,' it says, 'the singers of *aulōidia* sang elegiacs set to melodies', and it asserts that this is confirmed by an inscription dealing with music at the Panathenaea. The writer is apparently trying to explain the connection between Mimnermus, who was well known as an elegiac poet, and music involving the aulos; it implies that he was an ἀλωδός, a singer to the accompaniment of aulos. There may be nothing unorthodox about the implication that he also played the aulos himself, though obviously not at the same time as he sang; several other writers say that he was an aulete before he became an elegiac poet.<sup>1</sup> But if the central topic here is still the auletic *nomos*, it seems strange that the point which receives most attention is that Mimnermus was an aulodic singer. Nothing more is said about the auletic *Kradias nomos*. Obscurities of a similar sort appear in the remainder of the chapter. It focuses on another famous aulete, Sacadas of Argos, but it begins by describing him as a composer of songs and of elegiacs set to melodies. Only then does it mention his reputation as an aulete and his record of victories at the Pythian festival, and even this is confused by what follows. It says that he composed the so-called *Trimelēs nomos*, which in the context we would expect to be auletic, and perhaps to be the *nomos* with which he won his Pythian victories; but according to this passage, Sacadas actually designed it as a three-section piece to be sung by a chorus. In that case it has no place in a discussion of auletic *nomoi*. To add a final touch to the chapter's peculiarities, its last sentence offers a different view about the origin of the *Trimelēs nomos*: it reports the document in Sicyon, which Chapter 3 tells us was cited by Heraclides, as saying that the composer who invented it was Clonas; and if this were the case we would expect it to have been an aulodic *nomos*, given what we have already learned about Clonas from Heraclides. The evidence of Heraclides and the Sicyonian inscription would therefore suggest that this *nomos* was neither auletic nor choral.

We have to ask, then, whether the bulk of the material in Chapter 7 comes originally from Glaucus or from Heraclides, and how the confusing discussions in Chapter 8 are related to it and to the earlier chapters on the *nomoi*. In relation to the first question, I now need to mention the fact that in the opinion of most modern scholars the citations of Glaucus are not independent of Heraclides'

work, but were incorporated into his *Collection* by Heraclides himself.<sup>1</sup> This seems to me a likely hypothesis; it would fit with Heraclides' policy of assembling the views of previous writers, and would explain the previous intrusions of material from Glaucus into contexts due largely to Heraclides. We cannot tell whether Heraclides noted explicitly his disagreement with Glaucus' methods; if he did, the compiler's 'cut-and-paste' procedure has eliminated his remarks, except for the suggestion we noted at 1134d that the methods of the *harmonikoi* (which seem also to be those of Glaucus) are unreliable. But whether he did or not, it seems unlikely that he based the whole of his study of the auletic *nomoi* on Glaucus' work; yet Chapter 7 has Glaucus' fingerprints all over it. Chapter 8, on the other hand, shows no clear signs of Glaucus' influence; the problem it poses is simply that it is only very loosely related to the topic of the auletic *nomoi*.

Here is a hypothesis which might account for these anomalies. Heraclides wrote a passage on the auletic *nomoi* which incorporated material from Glaucus, but embedded it in a good deal of other discussion which the compiler has not preserved. Chapter 8 gives us a hint of the main thesis that the missing material conveyed. It did not make Olympus its central figure, but focused on composers such as Mimnermus, Sacadas and Clonas, all of whom figure in Chapter 8 and are represented primarily as composers of elegiac songs performed to the accompaniment of the aulos, and only secondarily (or not at all) of *nomoi* for aulos alone. I conjecture, then, that Heraclides represented the purely instrumental auletic *nomos* as nothing more than a minor derivative of a more fundamental genre, that of *aulōidia*. In his history of Greek music, *kitharōidia* takes pride of place and *aulōidia* comes a respectable second; whereas auletic composition and performance is just a relatively insignificant off-shoot of the song-tradition. Another point I made earlier is also relevant here: the *De musica* says nothing at all about the fourth kind of *nomos*, the kind composed for kithara alone. Given its complete absence from our text, it's unlikely that Heraclides said much about it; and if we put that hypothesis together with his treatment of auletic *nomoi*, we can reasonably conclude that he paid rather little attention to purely instrumental music of any sort. If that reconstruction is anywhere near the truth, Glaucus' position is completely at odds with it; he makes Olympus and his non-vocal auletic music the foundation of the whole tradition, and claims that at least two of the most prominent composers for voice and kithara were significantly indebted to his example. Glaucus is not entirely on his own in taking a view of this sort, as we'll see in a later chapter, but in the context of Heraclides' writing his theses are anomalous and disruptive. If Heraclides did indeed include the citations from Glaucus in his treatise, I suggest that we should respect his willingness to record views incompatible with his own, as a sign of his commitment to the methods of serious scholarship.

<sup>1</sup> This has been generally accepted since the publication of Weil and Reinach (1900); most subsequent scholars assume it rather than offering new arguments. Cf. most recently Pöhlmann (2011), 24.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Strabo XIV. 1. 28.



There is no great difficulty in understanding why Heraclides places song at the heart of Greek musical history, minimising the status of instrumental music, or why he gives precedence to the kithara over the aulos, or, again, why he chooses to give the impression, unlike Glaucus with his introduction of Olympus and Orpheus, that Greek music was an autonomous creation of the Greeks themselves. Let us consider the last point first. Suspicion of alien influences on Greek music was common in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 4<sup>th</sup>, the period of the 'New Music', and innovative composers were often accused of introducing non-Greek elements into the true Hellenic tradition. And we know from a passage in Athenaeus that Heraclides took this chauvinistic view to unusual extremes, even denying that the familiar Phrygian and Lydian *harmoniai* should properly be called *harmoniai*. He asserted that there were really only three *harmoniai*, corresponding to the three Greek races, Dorian, Aeolian and Ionian (Ath. 624c), and refused to grant anything non-Greek a place in the authentic musical tradition. He claims also that the Dorians and Aeolians had largely preserved their ancient customs, including those to do with their music, but that those of the Ionians had been contaminated by their contact with foreigners; the implication is that even 'Ionian' music, as it was performed in Heraclides' time, should not be counted as an element in the genuinely Greek musical repertoire. The attitude Heraclides seems to adopt in the *De musica* is evidently well in line with views he expressed elsewhere in his writings.

His privileging of song over instrumental music and the kithara over the aulos has a fairly obvious explanation: he was a Platonist, a student and colleague of Plato in the Academy. On Plato's death in 347 BC he left Athens and went back to his original home in Pontus, perhaps partly because he thought that the views of Plato's chosen successor in the Academy, Xenocrates, were polluted with ideas alien to those of the Master (as indeed they were). Plato, as we all know, rejected the aulos from his ideal city in the *Republic*; and in the *Laws* he shows deep suspicion about compositions for instruments alone, since in the absence of words, he says, it is very hard to work out what such music represents, of what it is a *mimēsis*.<sup>1</sup> The implication, in the conceptual environment of the *Laws* – and of the *Republic* too – is that we may not be able to identify the effect that wordless music will have on the souls of its hearers, and if we allow its use we may unknowingly be introducing an ethically corrupting serpent into our civic Garden of Eden. As a committed Platonist, Heraclides will have absorbed all this, together with the contention of Plato and others that the ancient music of Greece had been entirely noble and edifying. Hence it was essential to construct musical history in a form which reflected the primacy of song in archaic times, and gave the lyre and kithara precedence over the aulos; and since Heraclides almost certainly believed that Plato was right in what he said, a history of this kind would not only be salutary from an educational and ethical point of view, but would have the crucial advantage of being true.

<sup>1</sup> See *Resp.* 399e, *Leg.* 669d-e.

We can now put Chapters 3-8 aside, and look briefly at the remaining parts of Lysias' speech. Its final chapter, Chapter 13, can be ignored, since it adds no new historical comments, and for the present I shall also omit Chapter 11, which comes from Aristoxenus. We are left, then, with Chapters 9-10 and Chapter 12. Chapter 10 includes one of our main citations from Glaucus, but I shall not say much more about him here; he will reappear in my next chapter. The main questions I want to ask are these. First, are these chapters also based on Heraclides' work, or are they so different in their agenda and approach that they must come from another source, perhaps even one who is not named in the *De musica* at all? Secondly, whether they belong to Heraclides or not, can we infer anything new from them about the attitudes and historiographical methods of the person on whose writings they draw?

Readers will recall that Chapter 9 starts by shifting, without warning, to a completely new topic, that of the institution of festivals in Sparta and elsewhere. The abruptness of the transition could very well raise the suspicion that the compiler has left Heraclides behind and has turned to another source; and the fact that it gives prominent roles to three musicians, Thaletas, Xenodamus and Xenocritus, who have not been mentioned before, might also encourage this hypothesis. So too might another fact I mentioned before, that we are told their places of origin and that all of them lie outside the Greek mainland, whereas Heraclides has not even allowed himself to admit explicitly that his great hero Terpander came to Greece from Lesbos.

But I think these suspicions are misplaced. So far as the last point is concerned, we should notice that Terpander appears in Chapter 9 too, and that even here his place of origin is not mentioned, whereas those of all five of the others are carefully specified. In this respect the way in which Terpander is represented has not changed. We should also observe that though three new figures are introduced, three have also played significant parts in the earlier chapters – Polymnestus, Sacadas and Terpander himself. But perhaps more importantly, despite the abruptness of the transition, there is a genuine connection between the new topic and that of the *nomoi*. Festivals of the kinds whose beginnings are now under discussion are the contexts in which the *nomoi* were actually performed, and in archaic times the Spartan festivals, especially the Carneia, seem to have given a more prominent place to music than any others, and to have attracted the most celebrated performers from all around the Greek world. So after discussing the types of music performed at these festivals, Heraclides has gone on to consider the origins of the festivals themselves, and to identify the musicians principally involved in their foundation. This makes perfectly coherent sense as a form of presentation. Evidently the compiler has left out any intervening statements by Heraclides which would have made the connection clear, but the change of topic is intelligible, and we do not even need to suppose that the compiler has jumped forward to a very distant part of Heraclides' treatise.

But the subject of the origins of festivals disappears after no more than about ten lines of text, and is replaced by discussions of the kinds of music composed



by the musicians who had a hand in their foundation. The only one of them who is not considered in that way here is Terpander, and this may be another indication that we are still reading an account based on Heraclides; he has already said a good deal about Terpander's music and needs to add no more about it. The form of the discussion, continuing into Chapter 10, also reflects the pattern which we have already found in material from Heraclides, though here it is more pronounced; that is, in every case except that of Sacadas – about whom we are simply told for a second time that he was a composer of elegiacs – a statement about the music that each of these people composed is followed by a divergent opinion about it, or by a comment which casts doubt on the reliability of what has been said. In most cases the writers whose views contradict the original statements are not identified by name, but in the two cases where they are, both of the writers in question, Pratinas and Glaucus, have been cited in previous parts of the Heraclidean text.

In short, then, there seem to be no good reasons for denying that Heraclides is still the compiler's source, and quite persuasive reasons for thinking that he is. So do we learn anything new about his treatise from this passage? One comment that tells us nothing new, but helps to support a hypothesis I offered earlier, can be found in the sentence at the beginning of Chapter 10 (1134d), where Heraclides refuses to rely on the results of investigations by the *harmonikoi*. The composer under discussion is Polymnestus, identified again as a composer of aulodic *nomoi*, and the issue is whether or not he borrowed from the *Orthios nomos* in composing his melodies. The point is that the *Orthios nomos* belonged to the auletic genre, whose significance Heraclides does his best to minimise, or so I have suggested. Here he is casting doubt on the relevance of auletic music to the work of one of the important composers in his catalogue.

The other significant feature of Heraclides' essay that we can identify in this passage is that it did not completely ignore choral music. Apart from the strange suggestion in Chapter 8 that Sacadas composed his *Trimelēs nomos* for a chorus, everything up to this point has been concerned with music for soloists; but the compositions now attributed to Thaletas, Xenodamus and Xenocritus are all re-works for choruses – paeans, *hyporchēmata*, dithyrambs and so on – and this remains true no matter which of the conflicting opinions about them we accept. No doubt that is why these composers were not mentioned in the preceding chapters; they made no contributions to the soloistic genres with which those chapters were concerned. It's worth noting Heraclides' inclusion of choral music, though we don't know how extensively he treated it, in the light of Antonietta Gostoli's recent argument that the compiler of the *De musica* was consciously constructing a history of the lyric tradition as a counterweight to Aristotle's focus on dramatic genres in the *Poetics*.<sup>1</sup> I find her arguments persuasive, but we should be wary about extending them from the compiler to his principal source, Heraclides. Choral music figures only very briefly in this part of the *De musica*,

<sup>1</sup> Gostoli (2011).

but it is entirely possible that Heraclides went on to say a great deal more about it, and included a discussion of its role in drama. Indeed, the compiler betrays that fact that it is he and not Heraclides who has decided to focus primarily on music for soloists and especially for *kitharōidoi*, by putting the speech we have been considering into the mouth of Lysias, who is himself represented as a *kitharōidos*. That is, as it were, his excuse for giving his account the form that it has. I should immediately add that Prof. Gostoli has not fallen into the trap of transferring her conclusions about the compiler to Heraclides; she is entirely innocent of any such incautious inferences.

We came, finally, to Chapter 12, which is a grave disappointment. It starts by saying that there is also an account to be given about rhythms, since the ancient composers made innovations in that dimension of music too. But as I noted earlier, we have already been told about a number of rhythmic innovations; and though we are apparently led to believe that this chapter will tell us more about them, in fact it tells us virtually nothing at all. It merely takes us through a list of archaic composers, and asserts that each of them introduced some rhythmic novelty. But it does not tell us what any of these novelties were. It adds only that in making their innovations they did not go beyond the bounds of the noble and dignified style. At the end it contrasts them in this respect with composers of the more recent period, chosen to exemplify the supposed excesses of the 'New Music' of the late 5<sup>th</sup> century, whom it represents as abandoning the noble simplicity of the ancient style and pandering to popular taste. Here again there is no reason to doubt that we are hearing the voice of the Platonist Heraclides, just as we were in a comparable passage of Chapter 6. But it seems unlikely that he is to blame for the chapter's lack of substantial content.

To end this chapter let me summarise briefly the conclusions we have reached about Heraclides' musical history. The first point is that it was indeed a 'history', in the sense that he did his best to organize its ingredients chronologically. It was based, mainly or exclusively, on writings from earlier periods which he had 'collected' and arranged. Although he tried to represent the origins and development of the tradition in a way that fitted with his philosophical commitments and ideological prejudices, he gave significant space to differing opinions, and even – in the case of Glaucus – to fundamentally different approaches to the study of the subject. He gave precedence to genres that incorporated song over purely instrumental works, and to the string-playing tradition over music involving the aulos. The compositions called *nomoi*, performed by soloists, played a significant part in his treatise, but there are indications that he considered choral music too, perhaps extensively, and that the heavy emphasis on *nomoi* is due not to him but to the compiler. Hence we should not allow the prominence of the *nomoi* in the *De musica* to over-influence our own reconstructions of Greek musical history. His treatment shows symptoms of the exaggerated Hellenic chauvinism which is so clearly marked in the passage on the *harmoniai* in Athenaeus. He represented the archaic tradition as noble and serious, and distinguished it sharply from the later composers' colourful and irresponsible populism, which he despised; and this is



the only point, so far as we can tell, at which he marked a radical discontinuity in the musical tradition. Though he attributes important innovations to the archaic composers, and though only the interventions of Glaucus – with which Heraclides may not have agreed – give details about the ways in which they borrowed from one another, they are united in his account by their consistent adherence to the elevated and dignified style, closely linked to the epic tradition, which he attributes to Terpander, Stesichorus and their mythical predecessors. There is one final feature of his account which I have not yet mentioned. Heraclides evidently organized his material into sections dealing with different genres, *kitharōidia*, *aulōidia*, and so on. His main points of reference, however, are not genres or styles or modes of performance but individual musicians, and their ‘discovery’ or ‘invention’ of new ways in which melody and rhythm could be woven together to make music. Musical history, as he wrote it, was essentially a chronologically ordered and annotated catalogue of ‘first discoverers’. This is typical of the way in which Greek historians of the arts and sciences addressed their subjects, and we shall find many other examples as we go along.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed study of the Greek quest for ‘first discoverers’ see Zhmud (2006), 23–51.

### 3. Musical Historiography, 430–330 BC: Glaucus (Revisited), Hellanicus, Ephorus

THIS chapter begins with some further comments on Glaucus, and goes on to consider the work of two other historians. The first is a 5<sup>th</sup>-century writer who is not mentioned by name in the Plutarchan *De musica*, but whose work certainly lies behind some of the material we’ve been considering so far; the second is a 4<sup>th</sup>-century historian whose writings open up a new perspective on musical history, or at least one of which we have seen few traces in the material we have studied so far.

First, then, a few more remarks about Glaucus. He belongs, as I have said, to the last years of the fifth century, the era of Socrates, Anaxagoras, Democritus and the sophists. It was a time when the speculations of philosophers and scientists were beginning to impinge on the consciousness of the general public, as we can see from Aristophanes’ comedies; and Diogenes Laertius represents Glaucus as a source of information about two of the Presocratic philosophers, Empedocles and Democritus (D.L. VIII. 51, IX. 38). It is relevant, too, that he was a citizen of Rhegium, modern Reggio Calabria, in a region where the Pythagoreans had exercised their influence for nearly a hundred years; according to Diogenes he reported that Democritus came to Magna Graecia to study with one of the Pythagoreans, identified by Apollodorus of Cyzicus as Philolaus (D.L. IX. 38). Whatever the truth about that may be, the fact that Glaucus wrote about Empedocles and Democritus marks him as an intellectual, for whom the 5<sup>th</sup>-century cosmologists provided a worthwhile topic, and the pervasive Pythagorean influence in his cultural environment has a bearing on his musicological perspective.

Evidence of his familiarity with Pythagorean musical investigations appears in a report by Aristoxenus (fr. 90 Wehrli), preserved by a scholiast on Plato’s *Phaedo*, that Glaucus was not just a writer, but also a performing musician of a rather unusual sort. It tells us that the Pythagorean Hippasus, earlier in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, had conducted experiments with discs made of bronze, which showed that if their diameters were equal, and if their thicknesses were related in the ratios 2:1, 3:2 and 4:3, they would produce notes separated by intervals of an octave, a fifth and a fourth, the three concords fundamental to all Greek musical theory and practice. Glaucus, it continues, exploited this discovery, and was the first person to use a set of such discs not merely for theoretical purposes, as Hippasus had done, but for the performance of genuine music. We are not told how many discs he used, or what sort of music he played on them. But it’s worth noting that he would have needed to use no ratios other than those involved in Hippasus’ experiments in order to produce a set of seven or eight discs that sounded all the notes of a complete octave scale. Through steps each of which has the span of one of these musical concords, one can construct either the eight-note octave scale described



in Plato's *Timaeus* (and later, for instance, in the Euclidean *Sectio canonis*) or the seven-note scale, still spanning an octave, described by Philolaus, both of which are versions of the so-called 'Pythagorean diatonic'. It would even be possible to provide them with chromatic variants.<sup>1</sup> Hence Glaucus would have needed to do no independent research into the ratios of non-concordant intervals in order to design a set of discs capable of producing music of quite a complex sort. No doubt the task of teaching himself to play melodies on them, as no one had done before, demanded a good deal of labour and ingenuity; and his unprecedented achievement prompted people in that period to use the phrase quoted by Plato, 'the skill of Glaucus', to refer to any remarkable example of technical expertise.

There is no doubt, then, that Glaucus was both skilled in the arts of musical practice and interested in the ways in which music could be analysed. It is clear, too, that he engaged in such analyses or drew on those of others in at least two ways. In the case of the discs his activities borrowed from Pythagorean studies of the mathematical relations between notes, and of the ways in which they are instantiated in relations between the dimensions of the notes' physical causes. The material cited in the *De musica*, on the other hand, involved no mathematics and nothing of a specifically Pythagorean sort, but depended on a purely empirical examination of the melodic and rhythmic patterns exhibited in the works of particular composers. As I said in the previous chapter, the contentions attributed to him in the *De musica* cannot have been based on the reports of earlier writers, but must have had their origin in his own analyses of performances that he actually heard (or in what he learned from contemporary *harmonikoi* who had done this work). We shall see later that other people too used evidence of that sort as the foundation for assertions about musical history – possibly some writers contemporary with Glaucus or even earlier, and certainly some from the fourth century.

The period in which Glaucus lived was not only a time of intense intellectual speculation, but also the high tide of what we call the 'New Music', with the careers of such *avant garde* composers as Melanippides and Timotheus. This may also be relevant to Glaucus' perspective on musical history. We have already noticed that he seems to give the aulos-tradition a privileged status in musical history, representing Olympus as the key figure, and claiming that some eminent composers for voices and stringed instruments were influenced by his auletic music in significant ways. In his recent book *The Culture of Kitharōidia*, Timothy Power notes the fundamental role that Glaucus assigns to the aulos, and seems to find it strange and unorthodox.<sup>2</sup> But we shall find indications that Glaucus' view was less idiosyncratic than Power suggests, and we may be able to explain why he adopted it. The explanation begins from two well known facts. The first is that in certain late 5<sup>th</sup>-century circles it had become fashionable to despise the aulos and its music and to reject its use; and the second is that in the period

<sup>1</sup> Plat. *Tim.* 35b-36b, Philol. 44 B 6 DK (the second paragraph), [Eucl.] *Sect. can.* propositions 19-20. For an analysis combining the diatonic system with chromatic variant of the relevant sort see Thrasyllus ap. Theo Smyrn. 87. 4-93. 9 Hiller.

<sup>2</sup> Power (2010), 238-39.

when Glaucus was at work, critics commonly treated developments pioneered by virtuoso auletes as the origin and cause of the alleged excesses of the 'New Music', including new styles of *kitharōidia*. They implied that in order to keep up with popular musical trends, composers of kitharodic music had been virtually compelled to copy the spectacular innovations that aulos-composers had introduced, with regrettable results.<sup>1</sup> Glaucus' treatment of Stesichorus and Thaletas, and perhaps of other composers for whom his discussion has not survived, can plausibly be understood as a response to these critics. He would be showing that there was nothing new about the adoption of elements from the aulos tradition into compositions for voice and kithara; and he would also be making it clear that even great composers such as these, whom the reactionary critics admired, had borrowed from the pioneers of music for the aulos. His strategy, like that of many others, was to represent musical history as a succession of 'Great Composers'; but there were not two independent sequences, one of composers of pieces tied to string-playing and another of composers whose instrument was the aulos. He presented a picture of a single tradition which originated with composers for the aulos, but in which the two strands were intimately and essentially intertwined.

It's even possible that one of his main purposes in writing his musical history was to defend music for the aulos, and the innovative practices of contemporary musicians, against the attacks of their critics.<sup>2</sup> If that were true, he could certainly be described as unorthodox by the standards of most of the other writers whose work survives from this period. But we must remember that the accidents and prejudices responsible for the preservation of some documents and the disappearance of all the rest have been much kinder to authors with conservative attitudes than to the radical thinkers and musicians they criticized. We have works by Plato and Aristotle but not by provocative sophists such as Protagoras or Thrasymachus; and we have comic dramatists like Aristophanes who mocked prominent contemporary figures including the *avant garde* composers, but almost nothing that was written by their admirers, of whom there were certainly many. The critics would have had no reason to attack them if they had not become so popular and influential. For these reasons it would be rash and probably wrong to assume that no such writings existed, or very few. If Glaucus designed his history as a contribution to the defence of contemporary musical innovations, we need not regard this as unusual or surprising. We can be confident, in fact, that a good many other writers of the period shared his attitude, and may have sought to defend it much more directly than he did. We should be grateful that at least this much of the case for the defence has survived.

<sup>1</sup> On the central role of aulos-music in the context of the 'New Music' see especially Csapo (2004), 216-21.

<sup>2</sup> After saying that the passages taken from Glaucus 'attestent un esprit chercheur, raisonneur et volontiers combatif', Weil and Reinach suggest that the privileged status that he attaches to early music for the aulos, and to its 'mythique créateur' Olympus, might incline us to believe that he came from a family of auletes (Weil and Reinach (1900), xii).



Before I move on to our next author, I should mention that a recent article by John Franklin attributes to Glaucus a good deal more of the material in the *De musica* than I have done.<sup>1</sup> I am not altogether convinced by his arguments, but the issues are too complicated for me to examine here, and there is probably no way of reaching a firm conclusion. For present purposes, at any rate, I shall stay with my more conservative position. Franklin's article is mainly concerned, however, with the second author I shall consider in this chapter, and in what follows I shall borrow a number of points from his discussion.

The author in question is the historian Hellanicus of Mytilene, who is said to have been born in 480 BC and to have lived to the age of 85. These details may not be altogether reliable, but he was certainly still at work in the later decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. He is well known for his pioneering and influential attempts to find a secure basis for establishing and recording the chronology of events in Greek history. That is, he was looking for a series of events whose chronological relations were already known and recorded, so that other historical episodes could be associated with them and thereby assigned definite dates. Nowadays we use the sequences of years before and after the birth of Christ for this purpose. The Romans sometimes located events by reference to the supposed date of the city's foundation; more often they linked them with the year of some individual's consulship, or with such-and-such a year of a particular emperor's reign. Many Greek chronographers eventually adopted the well-known scheme based on the sequence of Olympiads, but this system did not yet exist in the time of Hellanicus.

He seems to have tried out several different systems in the course of his life, much of which was spent in mainland Greece, not in his native island of Lesbos. In what was probably his last work, the *Atthis*, the first known history of Attica, he dated events by reference to the sequence of Athenian archons. An inscription listing these officials in order from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, of which some fragments survive, was set up in Athens at some time between 435 and 415 BC, and it's clear that Hellanicus used it. The list may have been fully authentic, based throughout on official records, as Jacoby argued sixty years ago. But even if he was mistaken, and the details it recorded for years in the remote past were based on an unreliable mixture of oral tradition and speculation, it still provided Hellanicus with a clearly defined chronological framework for his history. In another work, however, the *Hiereiai Hēras*, whose composition probably overlaps with the *Atthis* but was mostly written before it, his reference system was quite different, locating events by the relations in which they stood to the sequence of priestesses in the temple of Hera in Argos. As Dionysius of Halicarnassus puts it, Hellanicus 'brought together (συναγαγών) the priestesses in Argos and the events that happened in the time of each of them' (*Antiq. Rom.* 1. 72. 2). The events catalogued by this procedure were not restricted to ones connected with Argos; the work was a general history with a broad scope, and the list of Argive priestesses provided only the chronological matrix in which they were set. These priestesses held their

<sup>1</sup> Franklin (2012), 720-64; cf. also Franklin (2010), 9-50.

office for life, so that events of any sort could be dated by saying that they happened in such-and-such a year of a named priestess's tenure of her position.

If we go back to what seems to be an even earlier work of Hellanicus, his *Carnean Victors*, we find that the chronological framework seems to be different again; but it is not easy to decide what it actually is. The work's title might suggest that its system was similar to that of the *Hiereiai*, and that it dated other events by reference to the series of victors on successive occasions of the festival of the Carnea at Sparta. If that were the case, Hellanicus must have had access to a complete, pre-existing list of these victors, and the work must have used it – as the *Hiereiai* uses the list of priestesses – as a fixed background against which a sequence of other events could be located, including events unconnected with the Carnea itself. But there is no good reason to believe that either of these things is true. We have only a few fragments from the *Carnean Victors*, together with a small number of reports which do not mention it explicitly but are almost certainly derived from it; but everything we have is concerned directly with victors themselves. It therefore seems probable that the title *Carnean Victors* does not refer merely to the chronological grid used for dating events of other kinds, but announces – like most book-titles – what the work was actually about.

Our evidence suggests also that the musicians he discussed in this essay had another feature in common. We know, in particular, that it represented Terpander as the first victor at the Carnea, and said that he lived in the reign of Midas, the semi-legendary king of Phrygia (*FGrH* 4 F 85a-b). It also mentioned the kitharode Arion, asserting that he was the first person to establish τοὺς κυκλίους χορούς, that is, performances of dithyrambs, by contrast with others who attributed this achievement to Lasus of Hermione (F 86). Since Arion figured in Hellanicus' *Carnean Victors*, and since – according to Herodotus and others – he was the foremost kitharode of his time, we can conclude with some confidence, as Franklin says, that Hellanicus represented Arion as a Carnean victor. In introducing his well-known story of Arion and the dolphin (1. 23-4), Herodotus also tells us that he was the first person to train a dithyrambic chorus, in Corinth, which clearly suggests that he was drawing on Hellanicus' account; and this inference becomes a near-certainty when we discover from the same passage that he took his evidence from both Corinthian and Lesbian sources. In the light of Hellanicus' obsession with chronology, it's therefore interesting that Herodotus gives a clear indication of Arion's date by placing him in the time of the tyrant Periander. Coupled with Terpander's location in the time of Midas, this suggests that Hellanicus did not try to date the victors' successes in particular years, in the manner of the *Atthis* and the *Hiereiai*, but was content with a rather less exact framework, marked out by the reigns of kings and dictators.

If we now go back to the *De musica*, we find an explicit reference to the Carnea at 1133d. Immediately before it comes a discussion of the music of Terpander, and a statement associating his student Cepion with the invention of the so-called 'Asiatic kithara'. What we are told at 1133d is that the Lesbian kitharode Periclitus was the last victor at the Spartan Carnea; and though this is obviously not true as it stands, its intended meaning is explained in the next sentence: 'When he



died, the continuous succession of kitharodes among the Lesbians came to an end'. But this in its turn cannot mean exactly what it says, since we have ample evidence of the continued existence of Lesbian exponents of *kitharōidia* at least up to the time of Phrynīs, in the middle years of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The point must be that the writer whose work the compiler paraphrases in this passage was referring to a succession of Lesbian kitharodes who were the best in the Greek world in their lifetimes, and that he identified them as those who won successive victories at the Carneia. In that case we can hardly resist the conclusion reached by Martin West<sup>1</sup> and defended very fully by Franklin, that the passage is ultimately based on Hellanicus' *Carnean Victors*.

If that is correct, we have the names of four musicians who were discussed in that work, Terpander, Cepion, Arion and Periclitus. Another who may have appeared there is Aristoclitus, described by a scholiast on Aristophanes' *Clouds* as a descendant of Terpander; we are told that he was a first-rate kitharode who was at the peak of his fame in Greece in the period of the Persian wars, and that he was the teacher of Phrynīs.<sup>2</sup> The feature that these people most obviously have in common is that they are all natives of Lesbos, like Hellanicus himself; and this, together with the fact that we know of no other musicians mentioned in the *Carnean Victors*, encourages another of West's and Franklin's conclusions. In their view the work did not even attempt to provide a complete list of all the winners in this contest; the Lesbian historian designed it purely as a record of achievements by the great musicians of his native island. Franklin may even be right in suggesting that its account began with Orpheus and ended with Phrynīs. Orpheus is connected with Lesbos by the legend that after his death, his singing head – or his lyre, according to other accounts – floated to the island's shores and transmitted its powers to the local musicians. Phrynīs was a native of Lesbos, and he might well have been represented as bringing the story of the island's kitharodes to a definite though depressing end. His innovative style separated him from the tradition of his predecessors. He is said at *De mus.* 1133b to have abandoned the time-honoured style of Terpander and his successors; and according to Plutarch (*Agis* 10. 4) the ephors cut away two of the strings on his unorthodox nine-stringed kithara when he competed in Sparta, almost certainly at the Carneia. Whether that story is literally true or not, it must reflect the fact that he was known to have failed in the competition, and his failure brought to an end the hitherto unblemished record of Lesbian kitharodes at that festival.

Even if Hellanicus was able to identify as many as eight or ten Lesbian kitharodes who had been victorious at the Carneia, it seems obvious that his work cannot have recorded only their names and indications of their dates; that much could easily be written on the back of a postcard. In fact the fragment on Arion and the dithyramb makes it clear that it included other information too about these musicians and their careers. We have no way of knowing how extensive this additional material was, but it's certainly possible and indeed quite likely that some of the

<sup>1</sup> West (1992), 330 n. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Schol. Aristoph. *Nub.* 971a.

other reports about Terpander in the *De musica*, and perhaps about Orpheus too, came originally from Hellanicus' work.

The excavation of remnants of the *Carnean Victors* from the *De musica* has involved some inferences and speculations whose cogency might be disputed. It seems much more obvious that there are connections between the *De musica* and Hellanicus' *Hiereiai*, in view of the explicit references at 1132a and 1134b to the inscription at Sicyon which named a series of poets and musicians, and aligned them chronologically with the priestesses of Hera at Argos.<sup>1</sup> I shall argue, however, that *Hiereiai* and the Sicyonian inscription may not be related in precisely the way that most scholars have supposed.

We cannot be sure how much of the mythological material in the first part of Lysias' speech was borrowed from the inscription; the case is clear only for the assertion that the musician who first invented the art of singing to the kithara was Amphion the son of Zeus. But since the reference at 1134b extracts from the inscription a statement about Clonas, and since Clonas is said to have lived shortly after Terpander (1133b), we can at least be sure that the inscription brought the sequence of musicians down into historical times. Given the way it is described at 1132a, as having named *τοὺς ποιητὰς καὶ τοὺς μουσικοὺς*, 'the poets and the musicians', it must have included a good many such people, and some of the other reports in the *De musica* may perhaps be derived from the inscription too. But we simply don't know.

In the passage where the inscription at Sicyon is first mentioned, the compiler tells us explicitly that it was cited by Heraclides, and we can assume that the second allusion is also taken from his work. We might therefore jump to the conclusion that Heraclides was drawing directly on Hellanicus, and perhaps he was. But there is a complication. If Heraclides was relying on Hellanicus' *Hiereiai*, why does he identify his source in the way he does, not by naming Hellanicus but by referring to the Sicyonian inscription? And how is the inscription related to the *Hiereiai*, if indeed there is any connection between them at all? It seems clear that the inscription was not just a copy of Hellanicus' work, which would have been much too long for such treatment, and which covered a much wider range of historical events than simply the poets and musicians.

Most scholars have supposed, perhaps correctly, that the contents of the inscription were based on Hellanicus' *Hiereiai*, selecting from it information to do with poets and musicians and omitting the remainder. In that case it must have been produced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, or at the very end of the 5<sup>th</sup>, and it has no independent authority. Thus Paul Christesen, for instance, in his book on the Olympic victor lists, says that it 'almost certainly postdates the publication of the list of priestesses by Hellanicus in the last third of the fifth century'.<sup>2</sup> He may be right; but I would like to suggest a different hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a good recent study of the *Hiereiai* see Möller (2001), 241–62.

<sup>2</sup> Christesen (2007), 517; cf. e.g. Griffin (1982), 159–60. The same view appears already in Weil and Reinach (1900), xi, who note that this relatively late date diminishes its value as a source of information about people and events in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>3</sup> For a recent discussion of the inscription and its date see Franklin (2013), 223–25.



The questions we should ask are, first, why the authorities in any city might have thought it appropriate to create an inscription of this sort, and secondly, in what period such an enterprise is most likely to have been undertaken at Sicyon in particular. It seems to me that if archaeologists discovered in the remains of an ancient city an inscription recording a long sequence of poets and musicians, we would naturally conclude that the city was a major cultural centre in the relevant period, and that the inscription was intended to memorialise and draw attention to the arts for which it was currently famous. And there is just one phase of Sicyonian history in which the city presented a profile of this sort. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century – but at no other time, so far as we know – a remarkable number of prominent and innovative musicians came from the cities of the Argolid, and several of the most distinguished came from Sicyon itself – Pythocritus the aulete, for example, who is said by Pausanias to have won the contest at Delphi six times in succession (Paus. vi. 14. 9–10), and the kithara-player Lysander, who is credited by Philochorus with major technical advances in his art (Ath. 637f–638a). The fact that the inventive string-player and theorist Epigonos came from his native Ambracia to make his home in Sicyon shows that the city not only produced important musicians but also attracted others to it. Other eminent musicians of the period are associated with Argos, Hermione, Phlius and several other cities of this small region. It is true that in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century Sicyon was ruled by tyrants, most notably the famous Cleisthenes, whose hostility to Argos makes it unlikely, as Franklin says, that an official inscription would have used an Argive system of dating in his time. But the tyrants were expelled in about 550 BC, and normal relations with Argos were restored; and Sicyon seems to have reached the height of its fame as a centre for the musical arts in the later years of the century. It seems much more natural that the Sicyonians, in that period, should have adopted a ready-made and long-established system of dating from their near-neighbour, Argos, than that they should have taken it – much later, of course – from an essay by a Lesbian chronographer working in Athens.

All these considerations point to the conclusion that the Sicyonian inscription pre-dated the work of Hellanicus by roughly a hundred years. This is not something I can prove; but I suggest, at any rate, that scholars who are more expert than I am in issues of this sort might usefully revisit the question. They might ask themselves first whether there are conclusive objections to the hypothesis; and if there are not they might ask, secondly, whether any good reasons remain for preferring the orthodox view about the inscription's origins. If my hypothesis is correct, however, Hellanicus will still come into the picture. It seems overwhelmingly probable that he knew about the inscription and mentioned it in his *Hiereiai*, perhaps drawing on it directly when the events he recorded were connected with poets and musicians. Perhaps it was the example of the inscription that alerted him to the value of the Argive priestess list as a chronological framework for historical exegesis. Heracleides in his turn will most probably have found the references to the inscription in Hellanicus' work, coupled with the statements about

musicians which Hellanicus took from it;<sup>1</sup> and in view of his stated policy of relying only on the evidence of 'ancient' writers (1134d), he would have been more inclined to treat it with respect if he knew from the *Hiereiai* that it was a product of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and not the 4<sup>th</sup>, or at least that it pre-dated Hellanicus.

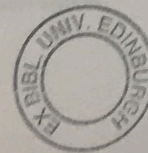
Hellanicus does not appear to have constructed his historical works in order to underwrite any ethical or ideological views of his own; patriotic motives may have affected the portraits he painted of the Lesbian musicians in the *Carnean Victors*, but on the whole he seems to have devoted all his efforts to assembling historical facts and setting them in a chronological framework. We cannot say the same, however, of the writer to whom I want to devote the remainder of this chapter, the 4<sup>th</sup>-century historian Ephorus, who shows little interest in chronology, and who repeatedly gives moralising or politically loaded interpretations of the historical episodes he records.<sup>2</sup>

Before turning to Ephorus' writings themselves, I want to remind readers of a rather general point about the attitudes and interests of intellectuals, especially in Athens, in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 4<sup>th</sup>. It has to do with the ways in which they imagined and represented the political, social and cultural features of Sparta, a Dorian polis whose traditions and customs were very different from those of most other cities, and which did not willingly open its doors to outsiders. As everyone knows, the profile that Sparta presented to other Greeks in the classical period was of a grimly militaristic and authoritarian power, which offered none of the liberties and cultural pleasures that citizens of the democracies enjoyed, and subjected its people to rigorous discipline, harshly enforced, from the cradle to the grave. This is of course the stereotype which Pericles was able to exploit, and to compare unfavourably with Athens, in the funeral oration attributed to him by Thucydides; and Sparta was regarded from outside with a mixture of fascination and revulsion. But by no means everyone in Athens thought Athenian liberty preferable to Spartan discipline. To take only the most obvious example, Plato found many of the Spartan system's features thoroughly admirable, though he rejected others, and his constructions of the imaginary 'ideal state' of the *Republic* and the 'second-best city' of the *Laws* made substantial use of principles and practices which he thought he saw at work in the Spartan way of life.

The point I want to make here, however, is that there were other aspects to the idea of Sparta that was lodged in the imagination of other Greeks, and that some of them were connected with its music. The 'Sparta of the broad dancing-grounds', evoked in the *Odyssey* (XIII. 414, xv. 1) and again by Pindar (*Nem.* 10. 52), was still imbedded in cultural memory, and it could still be celebrated as a place made delightful by choruses of young maidens (Pind. fr. 112 Snell-Machler), or as the romantic setting for songs sung by moonlight at the time of the *Carnea* (Eur. *Alc.* 445–51). These images are partly reflections of myth, and partly surviving reminiscences of the colourful, open and culturally innovative society

<sup>1</sup> Just possibly he saw the inscription himself, and his citations of it are independent of Hellanicus. But this, I think, is less likely.

<sup>2</sup> For a study of his work from this perspective see Pownall (2003), 113–42.





that Sparta had been in the early archaic period, when it welcomed enterprising musicians from elsewhere in Greece and absorbed their ideas, the time of Terpander, Thaletas, Alcman and others of whom we hear in the *De musica*. But they also suggest an awareness that the Spartans had not abandoned the activities of singing and dancing; they were still practised in the harsh and rugged Sparta of later times, and were indeed essential elements in the way of life it had adopted. To this we should add the special status that was regularly given to Dorian music by authors of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is depicted as pre-eminently noble, dignified and serious, as an expression of the manly virtues of courage and steadfastness, and as preserving the pure Hellenic tradition in music uncontaminated by foreign influences. The passage of Ephorus to which we shall turn shortly should be read, I suggest, against the background of these conceptions of Sparta and its music, and of the interest and curiosity that its customs provoked among citizens of other Greek cities whose cultural traditions had developed in very different ways.

Ephorus wrote a great deal, and though none of his works have come down to us intact, many passages derived from them are preserved by later authors, especially Strabo and Diodorus of Sicily (it is unfortunate that Diodorus, who makes the most extensive use of Ephorus' writings, introduced a good deal of confusion into the passages he based on them by trying to arrange the material chronologically, as Ephorus had not, or not with any consistency). We know the titles of a few of Ephorus' writings, including a treatise *Περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν*, *On the Good and the Bad*, and a work called *Παράδοξα ἐκασταχοῦ*, meaning something like 'Astonishing things from all over the world'. Three fragments from another work, called *Εὐρήματα*, *Discoveries* (FGrH 70 F 2-4, cited by Athenaeus), show that it included material relevant to music; one of them is a report about two 4<sup>th</sup>-century musicians, Stratoniceus and Philoxenus, while the other two refer to the invention of various kinds of aulos and a type of lyre known as the *phoenix*.

His most influential work, however, was probably called simply *Ἱστορίαι*, *Histories*. It was a massive history of the Greek world in 30 books, covering the period between the return of the Heraclids to the Peloponnese and the reign of Philip of Macedon, reckoned by Diodorus as a total of 750 years. Quite substantial excerpts from it survive, together with paraphrases and reports of other sorts, though they amount to only a tiny proportion of the whole. We have just one extensive passage in which statements about music play a significant part, F 149, preserved by Strabo.

The excerpt has a definite geographical setting in a fairly well defined period of history; it is concerned primarily with the social and political institutions of Crete, starting in the time of Minos and continuing as far as the 7<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It opens with some general remarks about the principles on which Minos based the institutions he established, and Ephorus' inventive reconstruction of these principles may give us some insight into his purposes in writing this enormous history, and the lessons which he expected his readers to learn from it. Strabo reports this preface as follows:

As for their constitution, which is described by Ephorus, it should be enough if we go quickly through its most important provisions. The lawgiver, he says, seems to take it for granted that freedom (*ἐλευθερία*) is a state's greatest good, for this alone makes property granted specifically to those who have acquired it, whereas in a condition of slavery everything belongs to the rulers and not to those who are ruled. But those who have freedom must guard it. Now harmony ensues when dissension, which is the result of greed and luxury, is removed; for when all citizens conduct their lives in a self-restrained and simple manner (*σωφρόνως καὶ λιτῶς*) there arises neither envy nor arrogance nor hatred towards those who are like them (Strabo x. 4. 16).

Since Ephorus obviously had no access to the mental processes of the legendary lawgiver Minos, he must have devised this piece of socio-political reasoning himself, perhaps on the basis of doctrines propounded by his teacher Isocrates. Its coupling of *ἐλευθερία* ('freedom') with *σωφροσύνη* ('self-restraint') may strike us as paradoxical if we remember the ideological polemics of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, since in that context *σωφροσύνη* was the principal virtue claimed for aristocratic and oligarchic institutions, whereas democrats rejected it in the name of *ἐλευθερία*. Ephorus' argument has other curious features too, and it's a pity that Strabo has apparently abbreviated it; but this is not the place to tackle the philosophical questions it provokes. My point is only that the principles to which it appeals are most probably ones to which Ephorus himself subscribed, and I suggest that among his purposes in writing his description of the Cretan constitution are these: first, to show that the strange and surprising features of Minos' arrangements make good sense in the light of these principles, and secondly to demonstrate the merits of the principles themselves, by showing how successful they can be when they are put into practice.

The preliminary passage leads directly into a concrete account of these institutions.

That is why the lawgiver commanded the boys to join the *ἀγέλαι* ('herds' or 'troops') as they are called, and the adult men to eat together in the public messes which they call the *ἀνδρεῖα*, so that the poorer people, being fed at public expense, might be on an equal footing with the rich. And in order that they should be ruled by courage and not by cowardice, he commanded that from boyhood they should grow up accustomed to weapons and hard labours, so as to scorn heat, cold, marches over rugged and steep roads and blows received in gymnasia or regular battles; and that they should practise not only archery, but also the *ἐνόπλιος ὄρχησις* (the 'weapon-dance' or 'war-dance'), which was publicly performed first by the Curetes and later by Pyrrichus too, who constructed the dance named after him, the *pyrrhichē*. Thus not even their games lacked elements that were useful for warfare. And he decreed, similarly, that in their songs they should use the Cretic rhythms, which were very intense (*συντονωτάτοις*), and were invented by Thaletas, to whom they ascribe not only their paeans and other local songs, but also many of their institutions. And he prescribed that they should use military dress and shoes, and that the gifts that they prized most highly should be their weapons (Strabo x. 4. 16 continued).

The contents of this account will sound familiar, but if its context and some of its details had not been preserved we would probably take it to be a description



of the Spartan way of life rather than the Cretan. Ephorus agreed that such arrangements are found in Sparta, but he denied that this is where they originated. 'Some people say,' he tells us, 'that most of the customs reputed to be Cretan are in fact Spartan; the truth is, however, that they were invented by the Cretans, but that the Spartans brought them to perfection' (Strabo x. 4. 17). He goes on to argue at some length that Lycurgus did indeed introduce these musical and social institutions into Sparta, but only after he had learned about them while visiting Crete.<sup>1</sup> There, so the Cretans say, he met Thaletas, whom the Plutarchan *De musica* connects with the foundation of the Gymnopaedia festival in Sparta, and whom Ephorus describes as μελοποιῶν ἀνδρὶ καὶ νομοθετικῶν, 'a song-composer and law-giver'; and Thaletas explained to him how first Rhadamanthys and later Minos had delivered these institutions to the people as if they came from Zeus. Ephorus insists that the visit of Lycurgus happened many generations after the establishment of these customs in the island. In the course of his discussion it becomes clear, however, that his information about the social system he describes comes almost entirely from his knowledge of contemporary Spartan practices, that in his time they were almost extinct in Crete itself, and that his contentions about their historical origins are based on inferences, not on his familiarity with customs still surviving in Crete or even on written records. It's worth noting that the most direct piece of evidence he calls on to support his view is connected with musical practices: 'The dancing that is characteristic of the Spartans, and their rhythms, and the paeans that are sung in accordance with the law and many of their other customs are called "Cretic" by the Spartans, implying that they originated from that place' (x. 4. 18). From one point of view, then, this account of the institutions of Minoan Crete is an attempt to explain how the Spartans came to acquire the musical and social customs which so fascinated other 4<sup>th</sup>-century Greeks.

Strabo has told us that he has abbreviated Ephorus' account, and has included only its main points, but even so it runs right through seven sections of his work (16-22), amounting to several pages in modern editions. I do not intend to examine the details. What I want mainly to emphasize is the way in which Ephorus incorporates the musical ingredients of the Cretan way of life into his description alongside such things as the ἀγέλαι, the communal meals, the military training and so on. Dances and songs of the specific kinds that are mentioned are not incidental or secondary features of the system but are given equal status with the others, as elements in a complex of interlocking practices all of which are essential to its success. He represents them, in particular, as fundamental to the Cretans' educational system: 'the children not only learn to read and write, but learn also the songs prescribed by the laws, and certain types of music' (Strabo x. 4. 20). The stipulation that the songs should be those prescribed by the laws (τὰς ἐκ τῶν νόμων ᾠδὰς) and that the music should be 'of certain types' (τινα εἶδη τῆς μουσικῆς) is clearly significant.

<sup>1</sup> The thesis that Lycurgus brought laws to Sparta from Crete is already mentioned – but very briefly and without any details – at Herodotus 1. 65.

As we all know, the idea that music is educationally useful, and that different types of music encourage the development of different moral dispositions, was already current in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century, and was theoretically refined and elaborated in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. The *Laws* has several other affinities with Ephorus' account; it too goes into practical detail about the integration of musical practices into the social system of the near-perfect city it envisages – which according to the dialogue's imaginary scenario is to be created in Crete – and it treats the institutions of Crete and Sparta as very similar to one another and in many respects admirable.

One might therefore read Ephorus' account of the organization of Minoan Crete as a deliberate attempt to set out the historical realities that lay behind Plato's rather generalized evocations of Sparta and Crete in the *Laws*. But Ephorus was born in about 405 BC, and by the time the *Laws* was published, some time after Plato's death in 347, he was already about sixty years old. I think it likely that at least parts of his *History*, if not the whole, were circulating in Athens before Plato even started to write his last work. In that case the relation between Ephorus and the *Laws* may be the other way round. We may plausibly guess that it was Plato's reading of Ephorus that prompted his representation of Sparta and Crete, in the *Laws*, as the most musically responsible and politically disciplined of Greek societies. No earlier writer, so far as we know, had presented an account of the institutions of Crete or Sparta or any other place that actually existed, in a way that made its musical activities so pivotal to its way of life, and had integrated them so closely with its economic, social and military arrangements, describing them in concrete detail and depicting them all as equally important.<sup>1</sup> But whether my hypothesis about Plato's debt to him is acceptable or not, the influence of his account on later writers is beyond dispute. To take only the most obvious and important example, there can be no doubt at all that it was a major source for Plutarch in his various writings on Sparta and the Spartans, and especially in his *Life of Lycurgus*, which includes extensive discussions of Spartan musical customs, and records the story of Lycurgus' visit to Crete in a similar (though not identical) form to the one we find in Ephorus.<sup>2</sup> He seems in fact to have preserved significant details of Ephorus' account that Strabo omitted. More generally, it is Ephorus, I believe, who pioneered an approach to historical writing which integrated musical traditions into the political arrangements of the societies it discussed; and it is his treatment in the *Historiae*, rather than Plato's in the *Laws* or Aristotle's in the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, that is ultimately responsible for the image of Sparta inherited by writers of later antiquity, as a society in which music, regulated by law, was firmly embedded among its fundamental socio-political institutions.

<sup>1</sup> But the background to Plato's treatment of Cretan music and politics is much more complex than this suggests. For an illuminating study see Griffith (2013), and cf. Perlman (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Plut. *Lyc.* 4 and 21.



#### 4. Aristoxenus

**A**RISTOXENUS was born in Tarentum in about 365 BC, at a time when the city was ruled by the great Pythagorean statesman, general, mathematician, musical theorist and philosopher Archytas. His father was a musician and gave him a musical training, presumably on the assumption that he would follow the same profession, and he had further musical instruction from others. But Aristoxenus evidently had different ambitions, and chose instead the life of an intellectual. We don't know much about his early career, except that he travelled to mainland Greece, spending some time in Mantinea and later in Corinth, and that he studied with the Pythagorean philosopher Xenophilus, perhaps in Athens. Eventually he joined Aristotle in the Lyceum, probably not long after its foundation in 335 BC. He became one of its most prominent figures, and he was still there when Aristotle died in 322. We should not think of the Lyceum merely as a training-ground for philosophers; it was a community of scholars with a very diverse range of interests. In modern terms we might think of it as an institute for research in every branch of human knowledge, whose president encouraged its members to pursue investigations in their specialised fields, and may also have directed them towards topics that had so far been neglected. A huge amount of writing emerged from the Lyceum in the first half-century of its existence, including works on the physical sciences, literature and rhetoric, history, biography, geography, political constitutions and a multitude of other subjects, as well as studies of a more strictly philosophical sort.

Aristoxenus contributed lavishly to this ambitious enterprise. The *Suda* asserts that he wrote 453 books, and even if we don't take this statement literally, as probably we should not, it's clear that his output was enormous. We have the titles of a dozen or so treatises on musical topics alone;<sup>1</sup> he also wrote biographies of philosophers and musicians, several works on Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, extensive writings on political and educational institutions, and miscellaneous essays of whose contents we know rather little. None of his works survives intact. Even the *Elementa harmonica*, which occupies 88 pages in the edition of Rosetta Da Rios, is only a remnant of the original; in fact it is a collage, put together by some ancient copyist from two different treatises on the subject, neither of which is complete. Apart from that, the longest passage we have comes from his *Rhythmics*, and it is much shorter than the *Elementa harmonica*; in Leonard Pearson's edition it runs to only nine pages.<sup>2</sup> But Aristoxenus' treatises were drawn on by many later writers, especially on musical topics, of course, but also for biographical material and for information about the early Pythagoreans. They preserve, and attribute to him by name, a substantial number of quotations from his works

<sup>1</sup> A list of titles of known musical works is provided in Da Rios (ed.) (1954), 95 n. 1, though it is arguably not quite complete.

<sup>2</sup> Da Rios (ed.) (1954); Pearson (ed.) (1990).



and reports of his opinions; and in many writings of Hellenistic and Roman times – including the Plutarchan *De musica* – there are passages where his name is not mentioned, but which can be identified, with varying degrees of probability, as echoes of Aristoxenian originals. Our understanding of the characteristics of his lost works and the ways in which he addressed their topics will always be incomplete, but in trying to investigate them we are not groping entirely in the dark.

Aristoxenus' writings certainly included passages on episodes in musical history. Whether he wrote a work wholly dedicated to the subject is another matter, and in a recent essay I have argued that he probably did not.<sup>1</sup> I shall not say much about that issue in this chapter. Let us now start looking at some of the information which our texts preserve. It would be impossible to examine them all in detail here, and I shall not offer even a superficial survey of the whole collection; instead I shall concentrate for the most part on just two passages. I shall make a few brief comments on some of the others at the end of the chapter.

A short excerpt from the *Elementa harmonica* may help to construct a context for the first passage I want to consider. In one of his many bouts of vituperative criticism in that work, he says of earlier writers on harmonics: 'The fact that they worked completely haphazardly, even on the issues that they happened to touch on, became pretty clear to us in our previous writings, when we were studying the opinions of the *harmonikoi*' (2. 25-30 Meibom = 6. 19-7. 3 Da Rios); and he mentions this previous treatment again at 5. 6-9 and 6. 13-19 Meibom (= 9. 15-16, 10. 19-11. 2 Da Rios). In a book published in 2005, Sophie Gibson infers from other passages of the *El. harm.* that he also wrote a work on the harmonic and acoustic theories of the 5<sup>th</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-century Pythagoreans.<sup>2</sup> This isn't something of which we can be certain. But there can be no doubt about the existence of the work on the *harmonikoi*, that is, the earlier writers on harmonic theory who adopted an empirical approach to the subject not unlike that of Aristoxenus himself, and whom Aristoxenus regarded – unlike the Pythagoreans – as his genuine though incompetent predecessors. His reference to it as the work in which 'we were studying the opinions of the *harmonikoi* (τὰς τῶν ἁρμονικῶν δόξας)' suggests that its title may have been 'Ἀρμονικῶν δόξαι', 'Opinions of the *harmonikoi*', which would locate it in the genre of 'doxography' pioneered in this period especially by Theophrastus. His comments in the passages I've mentioned make it clear that it was not just a record of the doctrines that the *harmonikoi* propounded, but also subjected them to vigorous criticism; and this too parallels the approach of Theophrastus in his doxographical writings.

Chapter 16 of the Plutarchan *De musica* may preserve a little more from the same work, or from one closely related to it. The situation is complicated both by uncertainties about the text and by interpretative difficulties that arise no matter how the textual issues are resolved; but whatever view we take on those issues, Aristoxenus will certainly come into the picture. The text preserved in the manuscripts can be translated as follows.

<sup>1</sup> Barker (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Gibson (2005), 121-23, where the evidence about both of these works is discussed.

The Mixolydian *harmonia* is also an emotional one, and is well suited to tragedy. Aristoxenus says that it was Sappho who first invented the Mixolydian, and that the tragedians learned it from her. That is, they adopted this *harmonia* and linked it with the Dorian, since the latter expresses magnificence and dignity, and the former expresses emotion; and tragedy is a blend of both. But in the historical writings – the ones on harmonics – they say that the aulete Pythocles was its inventor, and also that the Athenian Lamprocles, recognising that it does not have its disjunction in the position where almost everyone supposed, but at the top of its range, constructed it in the form of the scale running from *paramesē* to *hypatē hypatōn*. They also say that the 'slackened Lydian' *harmonia*, which is the antithesis of the Mixolydian and similar to the Ionian, was invented by the Athenian Damon (1136d-e).

It seems likely that the whole passage comes from Aristoxenus. If we accept the text as it stands, the first two sentences record his own opinion, that the Mixolydian was first devised by Sappho, and that the tragedians followed her example in adopting it; and the remainder is his report on the views of the people – whoever they were – who wrote a book or books on the history of harmonics. But for reasons I won't consider immediately, scholars have been very suspicious of the phrase ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἱστορικοῖς τοῖς ἁρμονικοῖς ... φασί, which I paraphrase as 'but in the historical writings – the ones on harmonics – they say'. It is marked as corrupt in most modern editions, and at least two ways of emending it have been suggested.<sup>1</sup>

One of them was first proposed by Einarson and De Lacy in their Loeb edition of 1967. It changes the dative τοῖς ἁρμονικοῖς to the nominative οἱ ἁρμονικοί, giving the sense 'but in their historical works the *harmonikoi* say ...'. If that were correct, it would allow us to link the people responsible for the subsequent statements directly with the *harmonikoi* that appear in the *Elementa harmonica*; and in past publications I've adopted this version of the text myself. But we cannot be sure that this emendation recreates the original text accurately, and there is at least one other possibility. A much earlier scholar, Daniel Albert Wyttenbach, in an edition prepared in the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and published at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, proposed changing the word φασί, 'they say', to φησί, 'he says', a change that requires us to alter just one letter of the received text. In that case the work on the history of harmonics is attributed to just one person, and he is obviously Aristoxenus, who is mentioned a few lines earlier. Wyttenbach also observed that according to Diogenes Laertius, Aristoxenus wrote a work called 'Ἱστορικὰ ὑπομνήματα, *Historical Notes*; and he suggested that the dative ὑπομνήμασι should be supplied in the text in agreement with τοῖς ἱστορικοῖς. This would make the phrase mean 'But in his *Historical Notes*, the ones on harmonics, he says...'. This seems an attractive strategy, and I don't think we even need to add the word ὑπομνήμασι to the text in order to get the result that Wyttenbach wanted.

In his historical writings, the ones on harmonics', strikes me as a clear and intel-

<sup>1</sup> Weil and Reinach (1900), 66, adopt the reading ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἱστορικοῖς τῆς ἁρμονικῆς ... φασί on the basis of one of the MSS, but I think it is unlikely to be correct and I shall not discuss it here.



ligible way of referring to a specific section of the work called *Historical Notes*; we need only assume that it discussed a variety of different historical topics and arranged them into groups, rather like the Aristotelian *Problēmata*.<sup>1</sup> We can hardly object to Wyttenbach's proposal on the grounds that if we change 'they say' to 'he says' here, we must probably do the same in the last sentence of the passage too; it's a very slight alteration, and in the context seems perfectly acceptable.

We therefore have two possible versions of the passage. With Einarson and De Lacy's emendation it attributes the statements that follow to the *harmonikoi* – presumably on the strength of a report by Aristoxenus – while with Wyttenbach's it assigns them to Aristoxenus himself. But Wyttenbach's version – with or without the addition of the word ὑπομνήμασι – faces an obvious objection: it seems to make Aristoxenus contradict himself. The compiler would be telling us first that according to Aristoxenus the Mixolydian was invented by Sappho, and then, in the third sentence, that he says it was invented by Pythocles. I assume that this is why Einarson and De Lacy devised a different reading, in which the two statements are attributed to different authorities.

But this objection is not conclusive. If we think carefully about the passage, we shall see that the writer or writers who mentioned Pythocles cannot possibly have said what the compiler alleges. Pythocles is a 5<sup>th</sup>-century figure, represented in the Platonic *Alcibiades* (118c) and elsewhere as a teacher of Pericles; and this is far too late for either the *harmonikoi* or Aristoxenus to have supposed that he 'invented' the Mixolydian *harmonia*. It was evidently used by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century tragedians, and another passage in the *De musica* (114of) traces it back to an even earlier time than Sappho's, attributing its invention to Terpander. The confusion must therefore have been introduced by the compiler, who has represented the original writer's statements in a misleading way. Stefan Hagel is almost certainly right, I think, in suggesting that the achievement that was credited to Pythocles by the 4<sup>th</sup>-century author was of a more technical sort, a precursor of the insight attributed to Lamprocles in the next part of the sentence. Perhaps the writer did not say that Pythocles discovered the Mixolydian *harmonia*, but that he was the first person to discover its structure or 'form', meaning that he was the first to analyse it and describe it explicitly. This would be perfectly consistent with the statements about Lamprocles. As Hagel suggests, the structure that Pythocles described may have been that of the eccentric-looking Mixolydian represented as 'very ancient' by Aristides Quintilianus.<sup>2</sup> What Lamprocles noticed, on the other hand, was the way in which this system could be modified to fit into the systematically related set of *harmoniai* described by the *harmonikos* Eratocles,<sup>3</sup> some version of which must have been used by composers of the 'New Music' to accommodate the modulations characteristic of their innovative style.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The comment of Weil and Reinach (1900), xx1, that no title corresponding to the one in our text appears in the lists of Aristoxenus' works is therefore misleading.

<sup>2</sup> Aristid. Quint. *De musica* 1. 9, 18. 20–23 Winnington-Ingram, with context.

<sup>3</sup> See Aristox. *EL harm.* 6. 19–30, 36. 25–33 Meibom = 11. 2–10, 46. 6–10 Da Rios.

<sup>4</sup> For Hagel's discussion, which is not quite the same as mine, see Hagel (2009), 171–73.

I suggest that the allusion to Damon in the final sentence might well be interpreted in a similar way. Scholars have always found it puzzling, and it's hard to imagine a reason why this musical theorist and sophist should have devised a new pattern of attunement – especially when we remember that Plato apparently approved of Damon's views, whereas the 'slackened Lydian' *harmonia* is among those condemned as morally corrupting in the *Republic* (398e). It seems more likely that Damon included a description of its structure along with his analyses of other such systems, and that the writer believed that he was the first theorist to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Not everybody, I suspect, will find the intricacies of this passage as fascinating as I do, but we have not quite finished with it yet. Let us try to draw some conclusions. If Wyttenbach was right and it records statements made by Aristoxenus himself, it gives us some information about the contents of one part of his *ἱστορικὰ ὑπομνήματα*. It shows that he described the achievements of people who had made original contributions to the analysis of musical structures, 'discoveries' in the field of musical theory. The statement about Sappho almost certainly comes from a different work; it appears several lines before the reference to the *ἱστορικὰ*, and the compiler seems to be trying to contrast what he says in one place with what he says in another. Further, if the suggestions that Hagel and I have made are on the right lines, it belongs to a different kind of enquiry. Probably it comes from the work referred to in the previous chapter (Chapter 15), where the statement that Olympus was the first musician to play a lament for the Python on the auloi, in the Phrygian *harmonia*, is assigned to the first book of Aristoxenus' *Περὶ μουσικῆς* (1136c). Both this and the statement about Sappho are records of episodes in the history of musical composition and performance. There is a similar report in Athenaeus 624b (Aristox. test. 107 Da Rios), which says that according to Aristoxenus the Phrygian *harmonia* was invented by the Phrygian aulete Hyagnis; almost certainly this comes from the same work. By contrast the passage paraphrased from the *ἱστορικὰ*, on the interpretation I have offered, is part of a history of developments in the science of musical analysis, and not in the art of music itself. But in one respect the historiographical perspectives of the *ἱστορικὰ* and the *Περὶ μουσικῆς* are apparently identical, in that in both cases the narrative was apparently built, once again, around a catalogue of 'first discoverers'.

If Einarson and De Lacy are right, on the other hand, and the statements about Pythocles and Lamprocles – and probably about Damon too – were those of the *harmonikoi*, there is no longer any reason to think that Aristoxenus reported what they said in his *ἱστορικὰ ὑπομνήματα*; the 'historical writings' will be those of the *harmonikoi* themselves. It is then quite likely that the source through which they were transmitted was the work whose title may have been Ἀρμονικῶν δόξαι, *Opinions of the harmonikoi*, to which Aristoxenus refers in the *Elementa har-*

<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis will be admissible only if Damon did indeed present analyses of the *harmoniai*, and this is not as firmly established as is usually supposed. For a major examination of the issues see Wallace (forthcoming).



*monica*. In that case these *harmonikoi* were not only the subject of an Aristoxenian essay concerned, at least partly, with the history of musical theory; they also wrote on the history of that topic themselves. Or perhaps just one of them did, because if this information was recorded by Aristoxenus, we need not take the plural noun ἁρμονικοί and the correspondingly plural verb φασί at face value. In the *Elementa harmonica* Aristoxenus often attributes theories to 'the *harmonikoi*', as if they formed a homogenous group all of whom said exactly the same thing. That is most unlikely to be true, and one may reasonably suspect that in these passages he is presenting ideas he found in the work of a single writer as if they were those of the whole class of theorists whom he calls *harmonikoi*. It is a little like the common practice of attributing some view to οἱ περὶ So-and-so, 'those in the circle of such and such a person', when in fact it is a view expressed only by So-and-so himself. In some cases there is no evidence and no real likelihood that any such circle of followers existed.<sup>1</sup>

I shall not try to adjudicate between Wyttenbach's version of this passage and that of Einarson and De Lacy; but let's suppose for a moment that Einarson and De Lacy are right. In that case, once we have eliminated the impression that the statements about Sappho and about Pythocles contradict one another – which seems to be due to the compiler's misunderstanding – there is nothing in the text to suggest that Aristoxenus criticized what the *harmonikoi* said, or tried to show that they were wrong. It opens up the possibility – which we might not have expected from our reading of the *Elementa harmonica* – that in his historical discussions he did not rely wholly on his own 'infallible' judgement, but was prepared, at least sometimes, to treat the researches of earlier writers as worthwhile contributions to the investigation. This hypothesis is confirmed by another passage in the *De musica*, Chapter 11, to which we shall now turn.

Specialists in ancient Greek music are very familiar with this passage. It is one of our key texts, and has been discussed many times. I am not going to discuss the technical details; instead, I shall begin by sketching the broad outlines of what it says, as a guide for readers who are not already saturated in ancient musicology.

The passage is concerned with another of those ancient musical 'inventions' or 'discoveries' of which we have heard so often. This time what was invented is said to be the earliest form of the scale that was later known as the 'enharmonic'. Greek scales typically included, as one of their basic sub-structures, a group of four notes – and therefore three intervals – spanning together the interval of a perfect fourth. The peculiarity of the enharmonic is that the highest of these three intervals is very large, and the two at the bottom are very small. On Aristoxenus' analysis the interval at the top amounts to two whole tones, and the two lying below it are a quarter-tone each.<sup>2</sup> Music composed on the basis of a scale of this

<sup>1</sup> Much the same is true of some allusions to the 'school' (*hairesis*) of adherents to the views of such and such a theorist, as for instance in Porphyry's allusions to the 'schools' of harmonic theory associated with Arcestratus, Agōn, Philiscus and Hermippus (Porph. *In Ptol. Harm.* 3. 6-7 Düring).

<sup>2</sup> I should record here that Stefan Hagel has argued in great detail that Aristoxenus' assessment of the sizes of these intervals does not reflect the real practices of musicians in archaic and early

type was used in 5<sup>th</sup>-century tragedy, and a small sample is preserved in a papyrus fragment of music from Euripides' *Orestes*. It was said to be very solemn and serious, and according to Aristoxenus it was the noblest music of all. He laments the fact that in his time it was virtually obsolete, at least in what he regards as its authentic form.<sup>1</sup> An even greater air of solemnity could be created in classical and Hellenistic times by using a structure corresponding to the archaic form of the scale whose 'invention' is described in our passage. In this form the structure contains only three notes and two intervals; the large interval at the top is retained, but the half-tone at the bottom is not subdivided into two quarter-tones. A system of this sort is used in the opening section of the paeon composed by the Athenian composer Athenaeus, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, for a ceremony at Delphi, and even our modern ears can appreciate the seriousness and dignity it brings to the music, creating an atmosphere entirely appropriate to a time-honoured religious ritual.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter 11 the invention of this archaic system is attributed to the aulete Olympus, with whom we are already familiar. He first used it, we are told, in the composition (or group of compositions) called the *spondeion*, meaning that it was music played during the pouring of libations to the gods. It turns out that the notes used in the *spondeion* were not restricted to the three involved in the structure I have just described. There were two others above them, separated by intervals whose sizes are also discussed in this passage; I shall mention them again in due course, but we need not concern ourselves here with the precise interpretation of the details.

In the context of our discussions of musical historiography, I want to focus less on the content of the chapter than on the way in which its material is presented. It begins as a report by Aristoxenus about assertions made by certain other people whom he calls *mousikoi*, and it's clear from the syntax that the report occupies most of the first half of the chapter, breaking off about halfway through 1135a.

Olympus, so Aristoxenus says, is reckoned by the *mousikoi* to have been the inventor (εὑρετής) of the enharmonic genus; for all music before his time was diatonic or chromatic. They suspect that its invention occurred in something like the following way. Olympus was moving back and forth in the diatonic, bringing the melody frequently to diatonic *parhypatē*, sometimes from *paramesē* and sometimes from *mesē*, while passing over diatonic *lichanos* [sc. without sounding it]; and he perceived the beauty of the character (ἡθος) of this procedure. His admiration for the system constructed on this basis led him to adopt it, and to create in this system compositions in the Dorian *tonos*. Now this

classical times (though it remains true that the highest interval of the enharmonic tetrachord was very large and the two lowest intervals very small). He offers the interesting suggestion that a system corresponding to Aristoxenus' description was used for a short period in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, while he was growing up, and that it is this that he subsequently regarded as the authentic and time-honoured form of the enharmonic: see Hagel (2009), 413-29, 445-46. But for the purposes of my present discussion, questions about the historical truth or falsity of Aristoxenus' view are largely irrelevant.

<sup>1</sup> Aristox. *El. harm.* 23. 1-24 Meibom = 29. 12-30. 10 Da Rios.

<sup>2</sup> See Pöhlmann and West (2001), 62-73. The system to which I am referring is particularly clear in the first 13 bars of the transcription on p. 63.



system included none of the features peculiar to either the diatonic or the chromatic, nor indeed those peculiar to the enharmonic. This, nevertheless, is what his first enharmonic pieces were like; for they consider the first of these pieces to be the *spondeion*, in which none of the forms of division shows the features peculiar to it (1134f-1135a).

These statements are followed by a short argumentative passage almost certainly contributed independently by Aristoxenus, which is best understood as a parenthesis.

[This is true] unless one adopts the hypothesis, based on observation of the higher *spondeiasmos*, that the *spondeion* itself is diatonic. But it is obvious that anyone positing this will be positing something both false and unmelodic – false because the relevant interval is smaller by a diesis than the tone next to the leader (*ἡγεμῶν*),<sup>1</sup> and unmelodic because if one were to make the peculiar feature of the higher *spondeiasmos* consist in the attribute proper to the tone, he would be placing two ditones in succession, one incomposite and the other composite (1135a-b).

After this the text returns briefly to the report of what the *mousikoi* say:

For the enharmonic *pyknon* which people use nowadays seems not to be the work of this composer. This can easily be grasped if one listens to someone playing the aulos in the ancient manner, where even the semitone in the middle tetrachord is meant to be incomposite (1135b).

The chapter ends with some general remarks whose origins are harder to establish. They might come either from Aristoxenus or from the *mousikoi*, or, just conceivably, from the compiler himself.

This, then, is what the first enharmonic compositions were like. Later the semitone was divided in both Lydian and Phrygian pieces. It is clear that Olympus extended the scope of music by introducing something that did not exist before and was unknown to his predecessors, and that he was the founder of the noble Greek musical style (1135b-c).

The account attributed to the *mousikoi* has several interesting features. It is obvious, to begin with, that they can have had no evidence to support the little story they tell about the way in which Olympus made his 'discovery', two or three hundred years earlier. Aristoxenus himself only says that they 'suppose' or 'suspect' (1134f ὑπονοεῖσθαι) that this is how it happened; it is just a hypothetical reconstruction of what Olympus did, or – to put it straightforwardly – a piece of imaginative fiction. It's fortunate that in this case the story's lack of historical credentials is easily detected. Almost all the reports we have about music in the archaic period were written long after the event, and often we have them only as isolated fragments whose original context is unknown. This passage should serve as a warning to us that Greek writers were perfectly capable of making assertions of these sorts without a shred of supporting evidence, and that the borderline between demonstrable facts and optimistic guesses is commonly blurred.

<sup>1</sup> It is not a 'leader' in the sense we now give to the expression 'leading note'. The word standardly refers to the highest note of a tetrachord (but in this case, of course, it is a trichord); and here it is the note *mesē*, the tone next to it being the tone of disjunction between *mesē* and *paramesē*.

It's equally obvious, however, that these *mousikoi* did have some facts at their disposal, that is, the facts which their fictional narrative was designed to explain. They knew that the music of the *spondeion* attributed to Olympus was based on a scale of the kind they describe. There can be little doubt about how they knew this. We know from a number of sources – Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle and others – that music attributed to Olympus was still performed and admired in the classical period; and the *mousikoi* knew about it because they heard it, or even performed it themselves. Quite possibly the form in which they knew it was very similar to its original archaic version, since music performed in ritual contexts is likely to be less subject to the whims of stylistic fashion than music of other sorts. We can conclude that their comments on musical history were based, at least in part, on much the same sort of evidence as Glaucus had exploited. They started from an analysis of music of which they had direct experience, and then drew inferences from their analysis about the way in which it had originally been devised, and about the pre-existing musical resources out of which it had been developed.

The remaining part of the report about the *mousikoi* brings out another intriguing point. They recognise that the structure of the *spondeion* does not automatically define it as enharmonic. It does not divide the half-tone at the bottom into two very small intervals, as was done in enharmonic music of classical times. One of the notes that were fitted into the span of the perfect fourth in classical systems is missing, and there are several different places in which it could hypothetically be located. Depending on where we suppose it should be, we could construe the structure as a defective version of any of the three main types of scale, enharmonic, chromatic and diatonic; but the *mousikoi* nevertheless insist that the *spondeion* scale is the earliest form of the enharmonic. Then what makes them so sure about that? It is most unlikely that they formulated the complicated argument in the parenthesis that follows, which has all the hallmarks of Aristoxenus himself in one of his caustic moods, and draws on a principle that he tries to establish in the *Elementa harmonica*.

The answer, I think, can be found in Chapter 19 of the *De musica*, an intricate and fascinating chapter which I have decided not to examine fully in this volume. It discusses certain other archaic compositions that survived into the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and which were believed to belong to what we might call the 'Olympus tradition'. Some of them were thought of as direct descendants of the *spondeion*, and are described as compositions in the *spondeiazōn tropos*, the 'libation style'. The discussion makes it clear that these pieces included the note omitted from the *spondeion* itself, and although the writer does not say so explicitly, we can reasonably infer that it was located in a position that defined the scale as enharmonic. The scale may have been one of the Lydian or Phrygian systems mentioned at the end of Chapter 11 itself, which are said to have been devised later than the *spondeion*, and in which, we are told, the half-tone was divided in two. I suggest, then, that the reason why the *mousikoi* of Chapter 11 represented the *spondeion* scale as enharmonic is that they took it to be the immediate ancestor of these later com-



positions; as we see in Chapter 19, they thought of their composers as 'followers' of Olympus, οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντες ἐκεῖνον (1137d), whose innovations were built on foundations that he had laid. If that is correct, we reach the interesting conclusion that they identified the category to which Olympus' compositions belonged by reflection on what came *after* them. They treated it as enharmonic because of its later development into a clearly enharmonic system. If they had taken a different approach they might have regarded it as diatonic, in view of what came *before* it, since they supposed that Olympus created the scale simply by omitting a note in a diatonic system. But they did not. Their approach hints at a teleological (or quasi-teleological) conception of history, in which the circumstances of an early period are understood by reference to things in the future, as steps along the way to some more highly developed state of affairs, or alternatively as precursors of inevitable cultural decline (as in Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*). A great deal of historical writing, ancient and modern, has taken this form, and it remains very tempting, though historians nowadays do their best to resist it. The distortions it introduces into our view of the past are brilliantly exposed, for instance, in a recent book by Chris Wickham.<sup>1</sup>

Readers may be wondering why I am discussing these *mousikoi* in a chapter on Aristoxenus, rather than in a chapter about his predecessors. There are two reasons, of which the first is very simple; I think it likely that they were not in fact his predecessors but his contemporaries. The word *mousikos* has several different shades of meaning. It can refer to someone who is not an expert in musical theory or practice, but has had a good general education in the broad area that the Greeks called *mousikē*, and has well-developed cultural sensitivities. At the other end of the spectrum, it can refer quite specifically to a professional musician; both usages can be found in Plato, for example. But since it is Aristoxenus who calls these people *mousikoi*, it is his usage that should guide us; and a passage of the *Elementa harmonica* leaves no doubt about what he means by the word. A *mousikos* is a person with such a wide-ranging expertise in musical matters that he can not only understand the structures of scales and the systems of key-relations, but can also apply his skills at a higher, more sophisticated level, and can undertake the much more difficult task of deciphering the musical strategies at work in actual compositions (*El. harm.* 1. 24-2. 7 Meibom = 5. 11-6. 5 Da Rios).

We can see that the *mousikoi* of Chapter 11 answer this description; they can discuss scale-structures in an informed and intelligent way, and they can work out the way in which a scale has been put to work in a composition that they have heard. If their observations are also being drawn on in Chapter 19, as seems likely, their musical understanding extends also to other aspects of composition and performance-practice, and specifically to the ways in which the notes of a melody differed from, and were related to, those used to accompany the melody in certain types of music. Expertise of this sort is clearly beyond the scope of a

<sup>1</sup> Wickham (2009).

mere harmonic theorist, as Aristoxenus represents it, and no doubt that is one reason why he does not refer to these people as *harmonikoi*. Rather obviously, the people most likely to possess skills of the relevant kind are the composers and performers themselves, and we should remember that Aristoxenus too was not just a theorist; his early training in the musical arts had equipped him to engage with such people on equal terms. It is also unthinkable that Aristoxenus, of all people, would have been content to draw on the opinions of anyone he did not consider to be a genuine musical expert, or who did not share his own views on the subject. My guess, then – and it can only be a guess – is that these *mousikoi* were not earlier writers whose treatises Aristoxenus had consulted; they were musicians with whom he had talked. When he says that they 'suspect', ὑπονοοῦσιν, (1134f) that Olympus proceeded in a certain way, the verb does not encourage the hypothesis that he is referring to statements set down in writing. I know of no texts that use it in that way, or of any writers who introduce their theories by saying ὑπονοέω instead of δοκεῖ μοι or the like. It's a verb that is more at home in an informal conversational context, in comedy, for instance, or in Plato's dialogues, and is often used by orators to refer to suspicions that are not based on adequate grounds.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, most scholars agree, I think, on the grounds of its language and style, that we have this passage in a form very close to what Aristoxenus originally wrote. In that case it's significant that here, in sharp contrast to the *Elementa harmonica*, he has recorded ideas taken from other authorities without offering any criticisms of them. On the contrary, in fact; the parenthesis in which he speaks with his own voice is designed precisely to show that the *mousikoi* are right in diagnosing the *spondeion* scale as enharmonic. Further, the statement in 1135b, 'this can easily be grasped if one listens to someone playing the auloi in the ancient manner', seems to belong to the report about the *mousikoi*; but it is strongly reminiscent of a similar statement in the *Elementa harmonica*, which is also concerned with the structure of the enharmonic: 'What we have said will be evident enough to people who are used to the first and second archaic styles' (23. 9-12 Meibom = 29. 17-30. 1 Da Rios). It looks as though Aristoxenus has embedded the ideas of the *mousikoi* firmly within his own discussion, so that his account of this episode in musical history as it were absorbs their ideas into itself. Their contribution thus becomes part of his treatment of the issues, and the passage as a whole is an example of his historical writing.

In the light of this conclusion, this passage can be put together with remarks in the *Elementa harmonica* to give an intriguing insight into Aristoxenus' conception of the course of musical history. It is that both he and the *mousikoi* whose opinions he records have detached the origin of the best Greek musical tradition

<sup>1</sup> Instances in comedy: Aristoph. *Lys.* 38, 1234, *Plut.* 361, *Pax* 993, Cratinus the Younger fr. 10. 2 K-A; in Plato: *Gorg.* 454c 3, *Resp.* 378d 6-7, *Leg.* 679c 5; in oratory: Antiph. *De choreuta* 18. 9, Andoc. *De mysteriis* 9. 9, 139. 8, *De pace* 35. 4, Isocr. *Ad Philipp.* 2. 9. The verb is also very common in Thucydides, typically in cases where the suspicion does not amount to an opinion grounded in substantial evidence, even though it may turn out to be confirmed by later events.



from mere chronological priority. They identify the 'best' music as enharmonic; and although they treat Olympus as its 'first discoverer' in Chapter 11 of the *De musica*, they imagine him as arriving at it from a basis in pre-existing music, all of which, we are told, was diatonic or chromatic. This fits perfectly with the picture presented in the *Elementa harmonica*:

The diatonic is to be reckoned the first and oldest of them [i.e. the three genera], for human nature comes upon it first; second is the chromatic; and the third and most exalted (*ἀνώτατον*) is the enharmonic, for our perception becomes accustomed to it last, with difficulty and much labour (19. 23-29 Meibom = 24. 20-25. 4 Da Rios).

Then if, as the *mousikoi* suppose, the 'primitive' form of the enharmonic found in Olympus' *spondeion* was derived directly and very straightforwardly from a diatonic system, we can imagine someone raising an objection to the conclusion that this enharmonic was the fundamental basis from which the noblest Greek music was developed. Why should we not locate its origin in the diatonic itself, of which Olympus' system was only a minor modification? From this perspective Olympus can hardly be thought of as a pioneer; it would suggest that his manipulation of the diatonic was no more than an almost insignificant staging-post along the way towards music of an authentically enharmonic kind, especially since – by the admission of the *mousikoi* themselves – his *spondeion* had none of the characteristics by which diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic systems can be clearly distinguished.

Although Aristoxenus clearly thinks of enharmonic music as the most admirable, there is nothing in his writings to suggest that there is anything inadequate or non-Hellenic about its diatonic and chromatic counterparts; on the contrary, he vigorously criticizes his predecessors for ignoring those systems and examining only the enharmonic (*El. harm.* 2. 7-25 Meibom = 6. 6-19 Da Rios). We might therefore expect him to agree with the view of my hypothetical objector. It is true that the passage in the *Elementa harmonica* about the relative antiquity of the three genera does not say that the enharmonic was developed out of the diatonic. But if my arguments are acceptable, Chapter 11 of the *De musica* aligns him firmly with the ideas of the *mousikoi*; and he presents his own independent argument in that passage to show that despite its lack of the obvious distinguishing features (that is, the pair of quarter-tones at the bottom of the tetrachord), the *spondeion* must indeed be assimilated to the enharmonic genus. It appears that he valued enharmonic music so highly that Olympus' tiny step away from the diatonic towards its fully-fledged form struck him as epoch-making, and gave it, rather than its diatonic precursors, the status of being the origin and inspiration of Greek music in its most excellent form.

The remarks in our text and in the *Elementa harmonica* about listening to musicians playing 'in the ancient style', together with allusions elsewhere, show that professional allegiance to the older forms of music persisted into the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the light of that fact we may get some – admittedly fragile – support for my hypothesis about the identity of the *mousikoi* from a fragment of Aristoxenus' writings preserved by Athenaeus 632a (fr. 124 Wehrli), which has been ex-

amined in an excellent article by Angelo Meriani.<sup>1</sup> It refers to a festival held in Poseidonia in which the Greeks come together and lament the 'barbarization' of their ancient Hellenic customs. 'In the same way,' says Aristoxenus, 'now that the theatres have been completely barbarized and this popular type of music has advanced to a condition of total ruin, we too come together by ourselves, few as we now are, and remind ourselves of what music was once like.' Of course we can't be sure who these few remaining musical conservatives were, but it seems a very plausible guess that they were musicians of Aristoxenus' generation – presumably ones who had found that the public no longer appreciated their work – who lived in Athens and formed a small community of like-minded exponents of an out-dated musical style. They came together from time to time, and passed a few pleasant hours grumbling about the sorry state into which music had fallen.

There are four conclusions which I think we can draw from our examination of this passage. First, at least in his treatment of musical history, Aristoxenus is not as contemptuous of other people's views and as determined to take all the credit for himself as we might have suspected from our reading of the *Elementa harmonica*. He borrows ideas from people whose opinion he respects, incorporates them into his own exposition, and defends their conclusions in an argument of his own. There is a hint here that other people disagreed with the treatment of Olympus' *spondeion* that the *mousikoi* provided. Aristoxenus says that it must belong to the enharmonic genus, as the *mousikoi* claim, 'unless someone considering the "higher *spondeiasmos*" were to conjecture that this element of it is diatonic'; and he goes on to argue, on the basis of a principle laid down in his writings on harmonics, that this conjecture would be completely impossible. We need not discuss the argument itself, or try to work out what is meant by 'the higher *spondeiasmos*'; the point is that in returning here to the combative attitude he adopts in the *Elementa harmonica*, he is unlikely to be attacking a position that nobody had proposed. Whoever they were, their assimilation of the *spondeion* to the diatonic genus would have endangered Aristoxenus' claim in the *Elementa harmonica* that enharmonic music in what he considers its authentic form is 'not the most despicable kind of melodic composition, but just about the finest of all' (23. 4-6 Meibom = 29. 14-16 Da Rios).

Secondly, his favourable attitude to the statements of the *mousikoi* shows also that he had no qualms about their method, that is, their practice of basing historical conclusions on the analysis of music heard in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, an approach that the *mousikoi* shared with Glaucus and the *harmonikoi*, but whose value is called in question by Heraclides, as we saw in an earlier chapter. Thirdly, his interpretation of the ancient melodies also draws on another kind of evidence that is not of a strictly historical sort, that is, the theoretical principles to which, in his opinion, all genuinely musical constructions must conform. Back in the time of Olympus, of course, no one had articulated any such principles. Nevertheless, so the argument goes, the *spondeion* scale cannot be treated as an early example of

<sup>1</sup> Meriani (2003), 15-48.



diatonic music, because if it were, it would break one of the rules to which Aristoxenus subscribes.

Finally, we have the statement at the end of Chapter 11, that by introducing this new kind of scale, the aulete Olympus became the founder of the noble Greek musical tradition. If we put aside the possibility that this remark is due to the compiler of the *De musica* himself, it must have come originally from either Aristoxenus or the *mousikoi* whose views he has been expounding. In the light of what I've been saying it hardly matters which of them it is. In either case it will be an opinion to which Aristoxenus subscribed, and here again his construction of musical history seems to be on the same lines as that of Glaucus, and in conflict with that of Heraclides. The indication that Aristoxenus traced the kinds of music that he most admired to an origin in early music for the aulos may seem surprising: he makes rather disparaging remarks about this instrument in the *Elementa harmonica*, and in a passage of Athenaeus he is said to have reckoned stringed instruments to be 'better' than wind instruments.<sup>1</sup> But his theme in relevant part of the *Elementa harmonica* is the unsuitability of the physical structure of the aulos, and of the intervals that it plays, as guides to the correct forms of harmonic organization; and in the other passage, if Athenaeus reports him correctly, his (rather curious) reason for rating stringed instruments as 'better' is that wind instruments are too easy to play. Many people such as shepherds, he says, learn to do so without any instruction from a teacher. Perhaps the comment came in one of his essays on education, and the point was that stringed instruments were better than wind instruments in *that* context, since they called for more dedication and discipline on the part of the student. But in any case, neither this statement nor the passages in the *Elementa harmonica* would conflict with the historical claim that the best Greek music originated with compositions for the aulos.

I shall end this chapter with brief comments on a few other historical or quasi-historical remarks attributed to Aristoxenus, beginning with the story he tells about the Theban aulete and composer Telesias in Chapter 31 of the *De musica*. The gist of it is that when Telesias was young, he was trained in the 'noble' music of people such as Pindar, Lamprus, Pratinas, Dionysius of Thebes and certain other lyric composers. Later, however, he became seduced by the meretricious 'theatrical' music of New Wave composers like Timotheus and Philoxenus. But when he tried to compose music of both these kinds he had no success with compositions in the modern style, because, Aristoxenus concludes, of the lasting effect of his excellent early training.

The moral of the story need not concern us here, but there are several points worth noting in connection with Aristoxenus' view of musical history. First, it marks a clear distinction between two mutually exclusive styles of composition. One is primarily found in pieces from the 5<sup>th</sup> century or earlier; the other is that of the so-called 'New Music', which originated around 450 BC and reached its

<sup>1</sup> Aristox. *El. harm.* 41. 24-43. 24 Meibom = 52. 4-54. 10 Da Rios; Ath. 174e = Aristox. fr. 95 Wehrli.

climax in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 4<sup>th</sup>. But secondly, the distinction is not strictly between two historical periods. As I said earlier, music in the older manner was still being composed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Of those mentioned in the present passage, Dionysius of Thebes seems to have been active around 390 BC, and Telesias himself must have been working much later in the century, since he is said to have been a contemporary of Aristoxenus himself. Another well-known 4<sup>th</sup>-century musician with conservative attitudes was the aulete Dorion, mentioned in Chapter 21 of the *De musica*, who was one of the many musicians at the court of Philip of Macedon. Thirdly, Aristoxenus leaves no room for doubt about which of these groups of musicians preserved the 'noble' style characteristic of the true Greek tradition; Telesias was educated in music of the very best sort, and the works of Timotheus, Philoxenus and other such musical radicals were nothing but populist rubbish.

The fact that Aristoxenus took this view adds to the interest of a passage in Chapter 33. It too is almost certainly derived from Aristoxenus, though perhaps through an intermediate source; and Liana Lomiento has recently given us a very sensible warning against the assumption that such passages have preserved his ideas without distortions or contaminations introduced by the writers who transmitted them.<sup>1</sup> My point, however, is that it includes an analysis of the tonal structure of a composition by Philoxenus (which is also sketched, with rather naïve comments, by Aristotle in *Politics* 1342b), and that it does not overtly criticize it. It's true that the same passage provides a comparable analysis of a piece attributed to Olympus, and points out that the composer has succeeded in producing striking changes in the musical character of the work as it proceeds, without modulating between keys or forms of the scale; and one could interpret this as an implicit criticism of Philoxenus, who needed elaborate modulations in order to create his effects. But the writer does not say anything like that, and his theme in this chapter – irrelevant to our concerns here – is of a completely different sort.

More generally, Aristoxenus seems to have taken a serious interest in the avant garde composers of the late 5<sup>th</sup> century, despite his apparent disapproval of them. It would otherwise be hard to account for the fact that among his biographical works was a *Life of Telestes*, who composed in a style similar to that of Timotheus and Philoxenus (Dion. Hal. *De comp. verb.* 19), and it's a pity that we know nothing about its contents. We should certainly not automatically assume that it represented him in a bad light. This view might be encouraged by the fact that scholars in the past have repeatedly claimed that Aristoxenus' biographies of Socrates and Plato were scandalous libels. But recent essays by Stefan Schorn, Carl Huffman and John Dillon have cast serious doubt on that interpretation. They argue persuasively that the excerpts which created that impression can and should be understood as straightforwardly objective reports, and were not calculated to blacken the reputations of these philosophers.<sup>2</sup> Much the same can be said of the comment on Plato extracted from Book 2 of Aristoxenus' *Περὶ μουσικῆς* in

<sup>1</sup> Lomiento (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Schorn (2012); Huffman (2012); Dillon (2012).



Chapter 17 of the *De musica*, where he states that when Plato rejected Lydian and Mixolydian music in the *Republic*, he failed to realise that music of these sorts can also have some value in a state of the kind he describes. If Aristoxenus thought, like Aristotle, that music can have uses of many different kinds in a well-governed society, and that different types of music are useful for different purposes, there is nothing unfair about his remark about Plato. From an Aristotelian point of view it is entirely reasonable and well justified.

I shall end this chapter with two more general points. First, when we move beyond the *De musica* and the *Elementa harmonica* to examine the whole sweep of Aristoxenus' writings on the musical past (in so far as they are represented in the surviving fragments), one thing we are bound to notice is the extraordinarily wide range of the subjects he considered. I cannot discuss them in detail here. But Athenaeus alone provides evidence that he wrote a study of historical performers on the aulos, and in another work discussed the instrument's origins and history; and that he also discussed, for instance, the characteristics of obsolete musical instruments, the dance called the *pyrrhichē*, folk songs, the origins of various forms of musical parody, and the strange musical performances called *magōidia*, *hilarōidia* and *lysiōidia* (which seem to fall somewhere between fertility ritual and cabaret). This is just a random selection of the topics on which he wrote, and there were certainly others; his omnivorous appetite for information of all sorts about music in the Greek tradition seems very different from the relatively restricted perspectives we found in Glaucus and Heraclides. We may think of Aristoxenus as an exceptional case, who found things to interest him in questions that mattered little to anyone else, but in the next chapter we shall see that he was not alone.

Secondly, Athenaeus very rarely reveals much, if anything, of the contexts in which his quotations were originally set. In this respect the *De musica* is more helpful, as is the *Elementa harmonica* in its occasional passages with historical implications; and in every case where relevant evidence is available, we find that Aristoxenus' historical allusions are designed to promote an agenda of a non-historical sort. Everything we know about the work *On the Opinions of the Harmonikoi* indicates that it was a robustly polemical essay, which described his predecessors' views only in order to draw attention to their defects. The passage about the *spondeion* in Chapter 11 of the *De musica* is a contribution to his championship of enharmonic music, and the story about Telesias in Chapter 31 seeks to demonstrate the lasting influence on a composer of his early musical education and training. The analyses of pieces by Philoxenus and Olympus in Chapter 33 are also presented as examples chosen to prove a non-historical point, that the ethos of a composition or of any of its parts cannot be identified purely on the basis of its underlying formal structures – that is, the harmonic and rhythmic systems it employs – but arises from the ways in which the composer has put these systems to use. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, there seems to be little or no evidence that Aristoxenus wrote any works devoted to musical history for its own sake. Of course we might need to revise this verdict if we knew more about the

content of his *Historical Notes* or the compendiously titled *On Music*, or about the original settings of the snippets quoted by Athenaeus and others. As things are, however, we are left with the strong impression that Aristoxenus was above all an argumentative writer, and that his principal interest in the history of music was in extracting from it whatever could be deployed in support of his own theoretical and ideological positions.



## 5. Musical Historians of the Hellenistic Period

IN this chapter I shall be looking at the fragmentary remains of discussions of musical history written between the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>. There are a great many of them, and I can only consider a tiny handful of them here, but I have tried to select a reasonably representative sample. The first thing to notice about them is that the music of the archaic period, and even that of the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, was by this time ancient history, distant from the writers not only in time, but also because it belonged to a very different world from the one they knew. They were trying to reconstruct the social, political, religious and cultural practices of a tradition of which they were in some sense the heirs, but with which direct contact had been lost, and of which only hazy memories remained. Hence they had to go to work on the basis of such written evidence as had survived; and since few if any of the earlier texts collected in the Hellenistic libraries and elsewhere gave detailed accounts of the history of Greek music, they had to draw such inferences as they could from allusions scattered about in literature of every sort. It is not surprising that they often disagree in their conclusions.

Some of these writers were simply historians who included passages on music in works with a wider scope, but a substantial number of them wrote specifically on music, or on subjects in which music played a major part. We have titles such as *On music*, *On kitharōidia*, *On kitharōidoi*, *On auloi*, *On auletes*, *On choruses*, *On song-writers*, *On musical competitions*, *On paeans*, *On the Guild of Dionysus*, *On Stesichorus*, *On Euripides and Sophocles*, *On tragedy*, *On the technitai*, *History of the theatre*, *On the festivals of Dionysus*, *On the Panathenaea*, *On the Olympic festival*, *On the Isthmian festival*; and there are others with titles such as *On discoveries*, whose topics were not restricted to music but evidently gave it a good deal of attention. Passages with a serious bearing on musical history also appear in sources as diverse as Book 19 of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problēmata*, Theophrastus' *Historia plantarum* and Timomachus' *History of Cyprus*.

The transition into a different musical world from that of classical Greece is hinted at in a passage from a work I've just mentioned, [Aristotle] *Problēmata* 19. 15, probably written within fifty years of Aristotle's death. The question asked is why *nomoi* were not given a repetitive strophic structure in the old days, patterned as strophe and antistrophe, as pieces composed for choruses were. The answer, in outline, is that the *nomoi* were composed for professional soloists, who could sustain a long narrative and represent it mimetically in their music; strophic repetitions were not suited to this type of performance. On the other hand, says the writer, choral works were performed in the old days by 'free men' – that is, by groups of citizen-amateurs – who could not sing in this complicated manner, with its frequent modulations and its dramatic changes of character and mood. They needed the simpler sort of music that a repetitive structure provides. But he also tells us that at some time in the past composers began to create dithyrambs,



too, in the non-strophic, 'mimetic' form suited to professionals. Dithyrambs were of course performed by choruses – in classical Athens by large choruses of men, youths and boys drawn from members of each of the city's tribes – and we are led to infer that when these comments were written they were no longer performed by these amateurs, as they had been in the past.

The passage suggests, then, that public performances in the writer's time were almost entirely in the hands of professionals, and that in some respects they were very unlike those of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There is plenty of other evidence to support this picture, but that is not my main point. What I want to emphasize is that the writer realised that this was the case, and knew that he was speculating about the causes of a significant fracture in the musical tradition. We should not read too much into the fact that unlike Aristoxenus, he expresses no regret or disapproval about what has happened but merely records it; this probably reflects no more than the conventions of the genre in which he is writing, since the *Problem-writers* very rarely offer evaluative judgements on the phenomena they describe. The significant point is simply that from his perspective the public musical practices of the classical period belonged to a bygone world.

Fragments of another writer of this period, Dicaearchus, show an awareness of similar changes in musical practices that found their niche in a different and less public sphere of cultural activity. Dicaearchus was another member of the Lyceum; his writings come from the last decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, in roughly the same time-frame as those of Aristoxenus. They included a cultural history of the Greek way of life, perhaps called 'Ἑλληνικὸς βίος' or 'Ἑλλάδος βίος'; biographies of several philosophers, including Pythagoras and Plato; studies of Homer and Alcaeus, and of the plots of tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides; a work *Περὶ μουσικῶν ἀγώνων*, 'On musical contests'; a dialogue or dialogues on the soul, and other philosophical works; a geographical treatise called *Περίοδος γῆς*, 'Circuit of the world'; and several other essays of various sorts. His writings survive only in the form of scattered fragments; but they were greatly admired by later scholars, and their disappearance is a very serious loss.

The subject discussed in the passage I've mentioned is music in the context of the symposium. It is said to come from his work on the musical contests – that is, the competitions at the great festivals – which seems a rather odd context for a topic of this sort, and we don't know why he addressed it there. Short summaries of the passage are presented in two fragments (frs 88 and 89 Wehrli), cited by scholiasts on Plato's *Gorgias* and Aristophanes' *Clouds*, both of which are attributed to Dicaearchus by name.<sup>1</sup> It's clear that the scholiasts have not given us

<sup>1</sup> Fr. 88. *Suda* s.v. Σκολιόν (= Schol. Plat. *Gorg.* 451c): ἡ παροίνιος ᾠδή, ὡς μὲν Δικαίρχος ἐν τῷ περὶ μουσικῶν ἀγώνων, ὅτι τρία γένη ἦν ᾠδῶν, τὸ μὲν ὑπὸ πάντων ἀδόμενον, <τὸ δὲ> καθ' ἕνα ἐξ ἧς, τὸ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν συνεσιωτῶν ὡς ἐτύχε τῇ τάξει. ὁ δὲ καλεῖσθαι διὰ τὴν τάξιν σκολιόν.

Fr. 89. Schol. Aristoph. *Nub.* 1364: Δικαίρχος ἐν τῷ περὶ μουσικῶν <ἀγώνων>: ἐτι δὲ κοινὸν τι πάθος φαίνεται συνακλουθεῖν τοῖς διερχομένοις εἴτε μετὰ μέλους εἴτε ἀνευ μέλους, ἔχοντάς τι ἐν τῇ χειρὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἀφήγγιν. οἱ τε γὰρ ἀδόντες ἐν τοῖς συμποσίοις ἐκ παλαιᾶς τινας παραδόσεις κλῶνα διάφνης ἢ μωρίας λαβόντες ᾄδουσιν.

the whole passage, but there are other texts which preserve it in a more complete form. They do not mention the author's name, but the similarities between their content and those of the two fragments allow us to infer, with a fair degree of confidence, that they are based on Dicaearchus' assertions. Two texts in particular probably preserve the content of the *Περὶ μουσικῶν ἀγώνων* without very much alteration. The one that offers the most information is in Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales* (615b-c), but I suspect that Plutarch may have supplemented it from other sources; and I think that the general outlines of what Dicaearchus said are probably best preserved in another, rather less elaborate version. It is a fragment quoted by Athenaeus in Book 15 of the *Deipnosophistae*, in his discussion of the drinking-songs called *skolia*; and it comes from Book 2 of the work *Περὶ βιβλίων χρήσεως*, 'On using books', by the scholar Artemon of Cassandreia, probably written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (fr. 10 Müller). Athenaeus prefaces the quotation by saying: 'They are not called *skolia* ['crooked songs'] because the style in which the melody was composed was crooked, for they say that *skolia* are among the relaxed kinds of composition'; and he continues as follows.

Rather, as Artemon of Cassandreia says in Book 2 of his *On Using Books*, there were three classes to which the songs sung at symposia belonged. In the first of these it was the custom for everyone to sing. The second was also sung by everyone, but they did so one after another, in order round the circle. As to the third, which came after all the others, not everyone took part in it, but only those who were thought to be experts, in which-ever places they happened to be reclining. Hence because this was the only sort to have no orderly arrangement, by contrast with the others, and was not sung <by them all> at the same time or in strict succession, it was called *skolion* ['crooked']. This kind of song was sung when the communal songs which were compulsory for everyone had been completed; for it was at that point that they thought it appropriate for each of the skilful performers to present a beautiful song to the company; and they considered as beautiful the kind of song that included some sort of wise advice which seemed useful in the conduct of life (Ath. 694a-c).<sup>1</sup>

I shall not offer here any defence of the view that this passage keeps quite close to the original text of Dicaearchus; for present purposes let's assume that it does. Nor shall I discuss the details it records; they are interesting, to be sure, but as in other such cases, they are not my present concern. The first thing to notice is that Artemon represents these customs as belonging to the past; this is the way in which songs used to be performed at symposia, and it does not correspond to anything known in his own time. Now Artemon was probably writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, when the classical form of Greek culture was genuinely remote in

<sup>1</sup> Ἀλλὰ τριῶν γενῶν ὄντων, ὡς φησιν Ἀρτέμων ὁ Κασανδρεὺς ἐν δευτέρῳ Βιβλίῳ χρήσεως, ἐν οἷς τὰ περὶ τὰς συνοσίας ἦν ἀδόμενα, ὧν τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἦν ὁ δὲ πάντας ἀδιδόν νόμος ἦν, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ὁ δὲ πάντες μὲν ᾄδον, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ γε κατὰ τινα περίοδον ἐξ ὑποδοχῆς, τρίτον δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τάξιν ἔχον, οὐ μετέχον οὐκέτι πάντες, ἀλλ' οἱ συνετοὶ δοκοῦντες εἶναι μόνοι, καὶ κατὰ τόπον τινα εἰ τῷ χρόνῳ ὄντες· διόπερ ὡς ἀταξίαν τινα μόνον παρὰ τὰλλα ἔχον τὸ μήθ' ἅμα μήθ' ἐξ ἧς γινόμενον, ἀλλ' ἵπου ἐτύχεν εἶναι, σκολιὸν ἐκλήθη. Τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον ἦδετο, ὅποτε τὰ κοινὰ καὶ πᾶσιν ἀναγκαῖα τέλους λαβόντων τῆς καὶ τῆς τῶν σοφῶν ἑκαστον ᾠδὴν τινα καλὴν εἰς μέσον ἤξιον προσφέρειν. Καλὴν δὲ ταύτην ἐνόμιζον τὴν παραίνεσιν τε τινα καὶ γνώμην ἔχειν δοκοῦσαν χρησίμην τε εἰς τὸν βίον.



time, but it seems clear that Dicaearchus' perspective on these practices was already much the same; there would have been no point in producing this careful account of them if they had still been familiar in everyday life. Like the writer of the Aristotelian *Problēmata*, he is conscious of a break in the cultural tradition, and is recording what was done in the past as a piece of history. Fragments from the works of 4<sup>th</sup>-century comic dramatists encourage the view that the customs described in the passage were indeed becoming obsolete, and that singing by the guests themselves was being replaced by performances by hired entertainers. The guests themselves were required to do nothing more taxing than to lie back and enjoy them. The practice of hiring *aulētrides*, girls – usually slaves – who played the aulos and often provided sexual entertainment too, was of course already well known in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and even the 6<sup>th</sup>; but in the 4<sup>th</sup> century they were joined by an elaborate cast of others – girls who played harps, dancers, acrobats, jugglers, performers on strange instruments imported from abroad, and so on, professional entertainers, in fact, of just about every sort that was known.

The beginnings of the change can be seen, I think, in Xenophon's *Symposium*, a fictional recreation of a symposium at the house of the absurdly wealthy Athenian Callias. Its dramatic date is clearly established as 422 BC. On that occasion, as Xenophon describes it, the entertainment is provided by a small company of hired performers owned by an impresario from Syracuse; musical contributions by the guests themselves are restricted to the singing of a paean at the beginning, and one song that Socrates initiates as a way of calming things down when the guests are beginning to get too riotous. There is nothing like the carefully organized sequence of songs that Dicaearchus describes. Xenophon was not present, of course. He was about eight years old at the time, and the first version of his *Symposium* was probably written over 35 years later, in about 385 BC. Most of it certainly comes from his imagination, no doubt conditioned by his experience of the conduct of symposia during his adult life; and by then, the transition from 'do-it-yourself' singing to professional entertainment was well under way. But the general outlines of the picture he paints may be authentic, based on what he was told by someone who was there at the party a good many years earlier; it has been suggested that his informant was Hermogenes, a devoted follower of Socrates.<sup>1</sup> Now Callias, as I've said, was enormously rich, and what he provided was certainly not typical of symposia in that period. The character of musical practices at a more normal symposium, much more like those that Dicaearchus describes, is better represented in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, which – by a curious coincidence – was produced in the same year as Callias' party took place. But Callias' symposium may mark the beginning of a trend, which started in the mansions of millionaires and gradually trickled down into lower levels of the social elite. I conclude, in any case, that Dicaearchus was indeed describing the extinct customs of an earlier age.

<sup>1</sup> Bowen (ed.) (1998), 12. Bowen's Introduction and commentary are useful elementary guides to the work.

Another point to be noticed is that the passage is designed partly to explain why songs of the kind described were given the name *skolia*. The word itself may still have been familiar from its occurrence in texts of the earlier period, but the reason why it was applied to the songs was no longer known. This becomes clear from the fact that a different explanation of it is given in a fragment of Aristoxenus (printed in part as fr. 125 Wehrli), cited by the scholiast on the same passage in Plato's *Gorgias* (451e). After recording what Dicaearchus said, he adds:

But according to Aristoxenus and the musical writer Phyllis, <the songs are called *skolia*> because at weddings they used to place couches around a single table, and taking a sprig of myrtle, one at a time in succession, they sang pieces of gnomonic wisdom and passionate love-songs; and the circuit <of the myrtle-sprig> was crooked [*skolia*] because of the way in which the couches were positioned in rooms with many angles, and also because extra couches were added as well. Thus the songs were not called *skolia* because of the way they were composed, but because of the crooked course taken by the myrtle-sprig as it was handed on.<sup>1</sup>

It looks, then, as if three different explanations of the use of the word *skolion* were current in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century. Some people – who are not identified – supposed that it was based on the convoluted form of the melodies; Aristoxenus asserted that it referred to the crooked route along which the myrtle-sprig held by each singer travelled from guest to guest, a route dictated by the placement of couches in the room; and Dicaearchus also said that it came from the irregular pattern of movement from one singer to the next, but only in songs of the third type he describes, songs that were reserved for expert singers who were scattered randomly around the space. A good many Hellenistic discussions of ancient musical practices involved disagreements and debates about the meaning and reference of obsolete words, and we shall meet them again in due course.

Finally, given that all three of these views existed side by side in the same period, we may wonder where the proponents of each of them found evidence which would support their interpretations. There was obviously no authoritative written source on which they could all rely, since in that case there would have been no disagreement. It seems likely that each of them was trying to draw conclusions from their reading of texts in which they found material that seemed relevant, but which had not been written with this issue in mind. Thus the people who thought that the 'crookedness' of the songs was a feature of their melodies may have got the idea from texts that mentioned the complexity of compositional forms in the 'New Music' of the later 5<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps noting in particular the frequent allusions to the *καμπαί*, 'bends' or 'twists', that were characteristic of this style. We may guess that Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus rejected this view because they knew that what the guests sang at symposia were typically songs in

<sup>1</sup> ὥς δὲ Ἀριστοξένος καὶ Φύλλης (ἢ Φύλλης) ὁ μουσικός, ὅτι ἐν τοῖς γάμοις περὶ μίαν τράπεζαν πολλὰς κλῖνας τιθέντες, παρὰ μέρος ἐξῆς μυρρίνας (ἢ δάφνας add. in marg. t W) ἔχοντες, ἦδον γνώμας καὶ ἐρωτικά σύντονα. ἡ δὲ περίοδος σκολιὰ ἐγένετο διὰ τὴν θέσιν τῶν κλινῶν ἐπὶ οἰκημάτων πολυγωνίων οὐσῶν, καὶ τούτῳ καὶ τὰς ἐπ' αὐτάς κατακλίσεις παραβύστους γίνεσθαι. οὐ διὰ τὴν μελοποιίαν οὖν, διὰ δὲ τὴν μυρρίνης σκολιὰν διάδοσιν ταύτη καὶ τὰς ὁδὰς σκολιάς καλεῖσθαι.



the older, simpler style. Aristoxenus refers specifically to wedding celebrations, perhaps on the basis of texts describing the chaotic arrangement of the couches in over-crowded rooms on such occasions. As to Dicaearchus, the likeliest sources for the view he presents are passages of comedy like those in Aristophanes' *Wasps*; the symposium is a context to which the comic dramatists repeatedly return. Alternatively, of course, some or all of these people may have been drawing on oral tradition – or to put it more crudely, on what their grandfathers said that their grandfathers had told them; and in that case it's no surprise that their accounts contradicted one another.<sup>1</sup> But we have no way of tracing ideas transmitted in that way to their sources.

The other fragments of Dicaearchus' writings on music are too slight to support any additional conclusions about the character of his studies in the history of the subject. But they were certainly extensive and wide-ranging, as we can tell even from the titles of the works we know about. The fragments do something to confirm that impression. Plutarch names him, along with Aristotle, Theophrastus and the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Peripatetic Hieronymus of Rhodes, as someone who greatly enjoyed discussions of choruses, auloi, rhythms and *harmoniai* (Plut. *Non posse suaviter* 1096a = Dic. fr. 74). A scholiast on Aristophanes' *Birds* 1403 (Dic. fr. 75) records that in his treatise on the festivals of Dionysus he followed Hellanicus in making Arion the first person to establish the circular dithyrambic choruses, by contrast with those who attributed this achievement to Lasus of Hermione. In his *Life of Theseus* 21 (Dic. fr. 85), Plutarch describes the dance performed by Theseus and his company when they reached Delos after escaping from Crete, which was supposed to recreate his wandering route through the labyrinth of the Minotaur. He tells us that according to Dicaearchus it was called the γέρανος, the 'dance of the crane', and he adds several other intriguing details about the dance and its performances in Delos, though we cannot be sure how much of this information he found in Dicaearchus' work. The scholiast on Aristophanes' *Wasps* 544 (Dic. fr. 86) says that at the Panathenaea the old men processed carrying branches, and then adds: 'But Dicaearchus in his work on the Panathenaea supposes – on what grounds I don't know – that the old women also carried branches at the Panathenaea, though many other authorities agree that it was only the old men who did so'. Dicaearchus also recorded that a rhapsode called Cleomenes recited the *Katharmoi* of Empedocles at the Olympic festival (Ath. 620d = Dic. fr. 87); and he offered an opinion about the origins of dances which involved throwing and catching a ball, like the game played by Nausicaa and her friends in the *Odyssey* (Ath. 14d = Dic. fr. 62).

Even this small selection of fragments shows that the topics that Dicaearchus thought worth discussing in writings on musical or more generally cultural history are strikingly diverse. They are not restricted to major developments in mu-

<sup>1</sup> I apologize for dismissing a serious topic so flippantly. To anyone who doubts the possibility of recovering significant aspects of oral traditions that underlie written histories, I strongly recommend Murray (1987) and (2001), together with the Introduction and several of the other papers in Luraghi (2001). In a later paper I hope to examine the issues in the context of musical historiography, but I cannot address them adequately here.

sical genres and styles, or to catalogues of innovations made by pioneering 'discoverers'; and we have already seen something of the same diversity in the writings of Aristoxenus. They were both members of the Lyceum in the same period; their interests overlapped substantially, and they must have known one another. It would be fascinating to know about the relations between them, and whether they cooperated in their investigations; there is not much evidence to go on, but I have not researched the question in depth, and perhaps there are clues I have missed in the surviving texts.

As is well known, Aristotle and his followers were among the first people who divided up the domain of human knowledge, systematically, into distinct subject-areas, and wrote separate treatises, for instance, on zoology, botany, music, politics and so on; and many writers of Hellenistic times adopted the same approach. But some of Aristotle's disciples – of whom Dicaearchus is an obvious example – also pioneered a more universalising genre of research literature, and this too was greatly developed in the Hellenistic period. Its main exponents were the scholars whom the Greeks called *grammatikoi*, and whom we might describe, fairly appropriately, as philologists. The task to which they set themselves was the thorough elucidation of writings of archaic and classical times, which were collected above all in the great libraries of Alexandria, Pergamon, Antioch, Pella and elsewhere. In many cases their works took the form of commentaries on individual texts, or on the writings of individual authors. They did not limit their investigations to linguistic issues or literary criticism, but tried to explore every possible strategy for illuminating the meanings of the texts and the socio-cultural contexts to which they belonged. Their work forms the basis for a large proportion of the notes which we call 'scholia', preserved in the margins of the medieval manuscripts of Greek texts.

These people, then, were not strictly 'historians', but their attempts to interpret the writings of earlier periods necessarily involved the piecemeal recreation of elements in ancient culture; and to that extent they were contributions to historical research. Scholars who deliberately set out to write historical treatises also drew extensively on evidence that they found in ancient writings, examining it by much the same methods as the *grammatikoi*, and for very similar purposes; and so too did the people who wrote on very specific and closely defined topics, in the manner characteristic of Aristotle and his immediate successors. Some scholars also made use of non-literary evidence, drawing inferences from inscriptions and sculptures, for instance, or from cultural practices that had survived in parts of the Greek world, or picking up information from oral traditions passed down the generations in certain communities. But the most important resource that all these kinds of scholar exploited was the collected corpus of ancient literature.

This kind of scholarship, based on a very close reading of texts and the excavation of obscure implications, historical allusions, biographical data, cultural curiosities and so on from minute details of ancient writings, is of course familiar to us. Anyone who has read or written articles in modern classical journals, or who is trying to write a doctoral thesis in the area of classical philology, knows very



well that it corresponds – at least in its general profile – to the scholarly procedures which we try to follow ourselves. They will also understand that research of the sort undertaken by the *grammatikoi* encourages developments on individual significant sorts. First, studies that take the form of commentaries on individual texts are, in effect, examinations of *everything* – everything, that is, to which even the smallest clue can be found in the text in question. In writings of that sort, boundaries between subject-areas are often ignored, and material relevant to any one subject-area is broken up, scattered around in different parts of the commentary. Secondly, even in writings in specific fields – writings on music, for example – there is an inevitable tendency for subject-areas to become fragmented, as scholarship on individual aspects of them proliferates and grows; alongside treatises *Περὶ μουσικῆς*, we find treatises on *kitharōidoi*, on *auloi*, on *auletes*, on choruses, on individual composers and on a good many other closely circumscribed topics. Thirdly, the meticulous attention paid by these scholars to textual minutiae leads to extensive discussion and debate about questions in musical history whose significance in the broader framework of the subject seems very slight. Modern scholars, in just the same way, write long articles and argue interminably with one another over issues which – at least to non-specialists – may seem absurdly trivial.

All these points and several others are well illustrated in a long and bewildering discussion in Athenaeus on what writers of the archaic and classical periods had meant by the term *magadis* (634c-637a). It is assumed throughout that the word was the name of some sort of instrument – which (as I argued in an article published twenty-five years ago<sup>1</sup>) is by no means always true – but the speakers cite several quite different opinions as to what sort of instrument it was. Some writers supposed it to be a wind instrument, a type of *aulos*; others were equally sure that it was a stringed instrument, some of them identifying it with an instrument known by another name in their own times – the *pēktis* according to one writer, the *sambykē* according to another, the *psaltērion* according to a third. As the discussion proceeds, it becomes clear that it was not only writers of Hellenistic and Roman times who no longer had definite information on this matter. The identity of the *magadis* was already a matter of debate among musicologists in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century; and though the word appears several times in passages of 4<sup>th</sup>-century comedy, the ways in which it is used by the comic dramatists suggests that they neither knew nor cared how it had been applied by musicians of earlier periods. It belonged to a phase of Greek culture with which direct contact had already been lost.

Now so far as we can tell, the instrument called the *magadis* was never used commonly by the Greeks, and it played no significant part in the development of the musical tradition. From that point of view the problem of its identity had very little importance. Yet the passage in Athenaeus cites the opinions of no less than ten scholars on the subject, dating from between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century

BC and the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>. It appears that the question was revisited over and over again, regardless both of its triviality and of the evident impossibility of reaching a final answer. It is striking, too, that the topic was not addressed only in specialised essays on instruments or in commentaries on texts in which the word occurred. Athenaeus' citations come from writings on many subjects, including works *On Tragedy* by Duris of Samos, *On Music* by Phyllis of Delos, *On the Technitai* by Menaechmus of Sicyon, *On the Isthmian Festival* by Euphoriion of Chalcis, discussions of the works of Ion of Chios by the Alexandrian scholars Aristarchus and Didymus, a work by Tryphon (another Alexandrian scholar), called *Περὶ Ὀνομασιῶν*, 'On Terminology', and something called *Reply to the Letter of Aristocles* by the Athenian scholar Apollodorus, as well as unnamed works by Aristoxenus and Posidonius. We can see clearly, too, that the evidence on which these writers relied was almost exclusively literary, and that all the passages they quoted to support their opinions came from lyric poets or dramatists – Alcman, Sappho, Anacreon, Pindar, Phrynichus, Sophocles, Ion of Chios, Diogenes the tragedian, the dithyrambist Telestes, and the comic dramatists Anaxandrides and Theophilus. None of the classical and archaic literature on which they based their conclusions was designed to supply the information they wanted, and inferences based on their statements were inevitably risky; the poets were often rather casual about the names they assigned to musical instruments.<sup>1</sup>

It's not surprising, then, that scholars who relied on some of these poets disagreed with the conclusions of those who relied on others. We are fortunate, in the case of these fragments on the *magadis*, that in most cases we know where they took their evidence from, because they quote it, and we can see that in almost all cases their opinions differ because each of them based his interpretation on his reading of only one or two texts. There is one exception, the great Alexandrian scholar Didymus, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and it's significant that he is the latest of all these writers. In the passage which seems to come directly from him (634e-635a), he presents both types of interpretation – that the *magadis* was a kind of *aulos*, and that it was a stringed instrument plucked with the fingers – and he treats them as alternative possibilities, citing texts in support of both of them. It is not clear how he extracts the former interpretation from the remarks he attributes to Aristoxenus, but this may be because Athenaeus has abbreviated his statements rather awkwardly. It seems to me quite possible, in fact, that the whole passage in Athenaeus, complete with its allusions to other scholars' opinions, is based on what he found in this work by Didymus. We should notice that its title indicates that the work was of a polemical sort. It was called *εἰς Ἴωνα ἀντεξήγησις* which I no longer think means 'Arguments against Ion', as I supposed when I wrote the first volume of my *Greek Musical Writings*; it means 'Contrary explanations concerning Ion'. That is, it was not an attack on Ion of Chios himself, but a set of interpretations of passages in Ion's tragedies – or perhaps only of passages

<sup>1</sup> Pindar, for instance, seems to use the terms *φόρμιγγς* and *λύρα* (and perhaps also *κίθαρις*, *Pyth.* 5. 65) interchangeably.



in the tragedy called *Omphalē* – in which Didymus either recorded contradictory views that other scholars had propounded, or contradicted what they had said, or both. On any of these interpretations he must have reported their views, and in doing so he probably also identified the very limited evidence on which each of them had drawn. In this way he provided Athenaeus with a convenient collection of conflicting opinions which he could dramatise in his fictional conversation.

I think it's worth making the point that many other such discussions in the pages of Athenaeus appear to be based on Hellenistic collections of relevant materials, rather than on his own first-hand reading of all the relevant texts. This is rather clearly so, for instance, in his excursus on folk songs at 618d-620a. It mentions a number of different writers who give information on the subject, but if we look at it carefully we can see that it falls into two distinct parts. The first begins by citing what Tryphon of Alexandria said about the millers' song called *Himaios*, presumably in the work *On Terminology* which I mentioned above; and the second begins, at the end of 619b, with another allusion to the same song, this time by Aristophanes of Byzantium, in the section dealing with the Attic dialect in his lexicographical work called *Λέξεις* or *Γλῶσσαι*. The second allusion to the *Himaios* adds nothing to the first – in fact it tells us less – and we may wonder why Athenaeus included it. The answer is very simple. Tryphon, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, is the latest of the writers mentioned in the first part of the passage, and Aristophanes (3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) is the latest of those mentioned in the second part. Both of them were lexicographers, and a glance at the passage in Athenaeus will show that it is most unlikely to come directly from a work or works devoted to the study of folk-songs. Each of its two main parts has been put together by someone interested primarily the meanings of unusual words – *himaios*, *ailinos*, *ioulos*, *katabaukalēsis*, *lityerses*, *boukoliasmos* and others in the first part, and *himaios*, *hymenaios*, *ialeomos*, *linos*, *ailinos*, *nomios*, *Kalykē*, *Harpalykē* and *Bormos* in the second. It seems almost certain, then, that Athenaeus drew on Tryphon's work for everything in the first part, and on Aristophanes' for everything in the second.

This passage should also warn us against jumping to conclusions about the interests of Hellenistic writers, on the basis of the ways in which Athenaeus, and other authors of the Roman period, have organized their materials. Here we have a discussion of folk songs; but that does not appear to be the topic of any of the scholarly writings it uses. Apart from the poets and dramatists who provide some of the original evidence, the works cited by Tryphon and Aristophanes are the essay *On Paians* by Semus of Delos, the *Constitution of Colophon* attributed to Aristotle, the treatise *On Lawgivers* by Hermippus, the *Erōtika* of Clearchus (which evidently included a collection of love stories), Aristoxenus' *Περὶ μουσικῆς* (*On Music*) and *Κατὰ βραχὺ ὑπομνήματα* (*Brief Notes*), and the thirteen-book history of Heraclea in Bithynia by Nymphis. The works of Tryphon and Aristophanes themselves were lexica, organized by subject-matter, like the surviving *Onomastikon* of Julius Pollux, rather than alphabetically in the manner of later lexica such as the *Suda*. The parts of them which Athenaeus used here were evidently con-

cerned with words designating types of song. There is nothing to indicate that any of these writers made folk-songs, as such, the focus of a sustained discussion. Just possibly Aristoxenus made them the subject of a section in his *Περὶ μουσικῆς*, but in all the other cases they were clearly incidental to the writers' main agenda.

This is not necessarily true, however, of the scholars who offered opinions about the *magadis*. When Didymus brought all their contributions together, if I'm right about that, it was not because he was interested in the identity of an ancient instrument, but because he was trying to explicate a couple of allusions in a play by Ion of Chios. But several of the previous writers whose views he incorporated were writing on specifically musical topics, or on topics in which music played a major part – Duris *On Tragedy*, Phyllis *On Music*, Menaechmus *On the Technitai* and Euphorion *On the Isthmian Festival*. All these writers are known to have discussed other ancient instruments too, as are several other Hellenistic scholars mentioned by Athenaeus. Euphorion, for example, writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, is not only one of the scholars whose opinions about the *magadis* are recorded in the passage I've discussed. He is also cited at 182e-f for comments on the stringed instruments called *nablas*, *pandoura*, *sambykē*, *baromos*, *barbitos*, *magadis* and *trigōnon*, at 184a for statements about the mythical inventors of three different kinds of *syrinx*, at 633f-634a for further information about the *sambykē*, and at 635f for the statement that instruments with many strings were known from very early times. (Here he also propounds the thesis – with which by no means all his contemporaries would have agreed – that they differed from one another only in the names by which they were known.) These citations, to which many others could be added, show beyond doubt that musical writers from Aristoxenus onwards spent a good deal of time and effort in the attempt to establish the identity of instruments mentioned in earlier literature, especially those with names that were no longer used.

Not all our fragments on instruments – or indeed on anything else to do with music – are as helpful as the passage on the *magadis* in telling us about the sources from which the scholars took their information. The problem can be well illustrated by a passage from a work by Artemon of Cassandreia, from whom I took an excerpt on songs at symposia earlier in this chapter. At 637b-f Athenaeus quotes his long description of an extraordinary instrument called the *tripous*, invented by Pythagoras of Zacynthus, a musician and theorist who lived around the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It was, in effect, a combination of three *kitharai*, each tuned to a different scale, which were mounted together on a three-sided frame that the player could turn with his foot, enabling him to modulate freely between the three *harmoniai*. We are told that Pythagoras played this complicated device with remarkable skill and that it was greatly admired, but that after his death it was no longer used. Perhaps the most striking feature of the passage is the amount of detail it includes; we are given almost enough information about the instrument and the way it was played to be able to reconstruct it for ourselves. But it died with Pythagoras himself, some two and a half centuries before Artemon



wrote about it, and we hear of it nowhere else. So where did he find the information, and how had it been preserved? Possibly the account originated with Aristoxenus, who mentions Pythagoras of Zacynthus in a different context, very briefly, in the *Elementa harmonica* (36. 34 Meibom = 46. 12 Da Rios). But we should beware of the temptation to attribute to Aristoxenus all musical allusions for which we can find no other source. We must admit that we simply do not know; and because we don't know, we should reserve judgement about how reliable the details of Artemon's description are. Nor do we know anything about the context to which the description belonged. Shortly before this passage Athenaeus mentions Artemon's work *On the Guild of Dionysus*, and the quotation about songs at symposia came from his essay *On Using Books*. Neither of these seems a very likely setting for the excursus on the *tripous*. Even if it was, we can say nothing about the general theme of the passage in which it appeared, or about the reasons why Artemon decided to write it. It's an intriguing and unusually detailed description, but one that is left floating frustratingly in total isolation.

In cases where we know the sources which scholars of this period used as the basis for their assertions, we can form estimates of the thoroughness of their researches, the reliability of the inferences they drew, and perhaps the assumptions which lay behind interpretations which seem improbable or perverse. Where we lack this information such judgements about the historians become precarious or impossible, as do our reconstructions of musical history itself. In passages between 620c and 622d, for instance, Athenaeus cites information from Aristoxenus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Semus of Delos in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Aristocles in the 2<sup>nd</sup> about various strange types of performance called *hilarōidia*, *magōidia*, *simōidia* and *lysiōidia*, and about performers called *autokabdaloi*, *ithyphalloi* and *phallophoroi*. The performances of the last two, which Semus describes in some detail, are loaded with sexual connotations, as we'd expect from their names, and so too are those of the *magōidoi*, who are described as men dressed as women, making lascivious gestures and behaving in thoroughly lewd ways. The other types of performance mentioned may have been equally bawdy, and all of them seem to belong to a fairly low cultural level. It isn't surprising, then, that eminent scholars such as Webster and Pickard-Cambridge interpreted them as forms of ancient fertility rituals.<sup>1</sup> But at least some of them still existed in Hellenistic times, and from what we can learn about their profile in that period it appears that by then they were no more than varieties of comic entertainment. It is possible that this is all they ever were, as Arnott implies, for instance, in his entry for *magōidia* in the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Aristoxenus, cited by Athenaeus at 621c, seems to support that interpretation; he says that *hilarōidia* was derived from tragedy and *magōidia* from comedy, apparently meaning that they originated as parodies of the two main genres of drama. In that case they were probably not particularly ancient, and had no substantial connection with ritual. But in the absence of any information about the evidence on which the scholars – including Aristoxenus –

based their remarks, we have no adequate grounds for choosing between these interpretations of the character and the origins of these performances, or of the contexts in which they were presented. There are, unfortunately, many aspects of classical and archaic music which we hear about only in a few fragments from Hellenistic writings, quoted in texts of the Roman period without any indication of the contexts in which the Hellenistic writers had set them, or of the sources from which they took their information. We have to be very cautious about the ways in which we use them in our attempts to understand the intricacies of pre-Hellenistic musical culture.

I want to end this chapter on a more positive note. The fragmentary state of our evidence seriously restricts our access to the facts of musical history. But we do at least know that the subject was much discussed in the scholarly literature of the period we have been surveying, and that by the late 4<sup>th</sup> century many features of classical and archaic music had disappeared, prompting attempts to identify and understand them on the basis, primarily, of philological research. Questions about these matters were apparently of serious concern to political historians, ethnographers, geographers and others, as well as to philologists and musical specialists. They seem to have recognised the real importance of music in earlier Greek culture, by contrast with the situation in their own time, when music outside strictly religious contexts was construed, for the most part, as nothing but a form of trivial entertainment. But we also know that a surprisingly large number of scholars wrote works devoted entirely to musical topics, sometimes under general headings such as *On Music*, sometimes with titles suggesting a narrower focus, *On instruments*, *On auloi*, *On kitharōidoi*, *On paians*, *On choruses* and so on. They included discussions of a much wider variety of topics than the titles by themselves suggest, topics which quite often seem quite unimportant, peripheral to the musical mainstream. The study of musical history in all its details seems to have been treated as a significant discipline, a recognised field of research to be undertaken by qualified experts. We may guess that writers such as the political historians, in whose work the subject played only a relatively minor part, drew extensively on these specialists' researches.

When we look critically at the remnants of these writers' work, we may justifiably conclude that few of them give us clear and reliable evidence about the earlier history of music. But from another point of view, they present us with a large and fascinating collection of information about Hellenistic writings on the musical history. In this chapter I have drawn mainly on material preserved by the most generous of our sources, Athenaeus. Even there I have hardly scratched the surface, and there is a great deal more in surviving works by writers of the late Hellenistic period, such as the geographer Strabo and the historian Diodorus of Sicily, and especially in works dating from the first three centuries of the Roman Empire, in Plutarch, Pausanias, Dio of Prusa and Julius Pollux, for example. No one, so far as I know, has ever made Hellenistic musical historiography the topic of a thorough research project; certainly I have not, and my remarks here have been no more than a sketchy introduction to the subject. It would not be

<sup>1</sup> Webster (1959), Chapter 3; Pickard-Cambridge (1962), Chapter 3, section 2.



an easy project. There is a huge amount of data on which it could be built, but it is scattered in many different texts, and even the task of collecting it all together would demand a great deal of time and hard work. Then one would have to find a suitable way of organizing the mass of tiny scraps, to devise intelligent questions that one might ask about them, and to propose answers that will command respect. Perhaps, if the evidence seems to justify it, one might try to identify differences between the ways in which the writers approached the study of musical history, and to examine the relations between them. As I've said, it would be an enormous and very difficult project. It clamours for the attention of an able and ambitious student who is looking about for a good topic for a PhD thesis or for a programme of postdoctoral research, and is willing to take the risk of mounting an expedition into unexplored territory. I hope that someone will take up the challenge.

## 6. Comic Dramatists and the Construction of Greek Musical History

THIS chapter is a little different from its predecessors. I shall no longer be talking only or even principally about writers whom we think of as historians, or as scholars seriously concerned with the facts of musical history; we shall spend most of our time in the company of writers of a very different sort. Secondly, whereas I have so far spoken mostly about the ways in which the historians approached the study of the past, and have only occasionally raised the question whether their accounts can be trusted, I shall be writing here mainly about problems that we ourselves face, when we try to reconstruct Greek musical history on the basis of the textual evidence. I shall comment first on a couple of excerpts from late 5<sup>th</sup>-century lyric poetry, and after that I shall concentrate almost entirely on just one group of authors, the comic dramatists. Some of the points I shall make will already be familiar to many readers, but even the best scholars sometimes seem to forget them, and they are worth repeating.

I want to begin by adding a little to a point which I sketched in the previous chapter, that when short fragments of a writer's work are quoted with no indication of their context, inferences about their bearing on the facts of musical history are bound to be precarious. What I want to add now is that the risks become even greater when the writer who quotes a fragment offers his own interpretation of it, especially if he is a writer of the Roman period, like Athenaeus, and if he does not attribute the interpretation to anyone closer in time to the author whose words he is quoting. There is a strong temptation to accept such interpretations at face value, but we should be very wary about doing so. In an unpublished lecture I gave recently at the University of Bologna, for instance, I tried to show that there is no justification for accepting the way in which Athenaeus interprets a well known excerpt from a 5<sup>th</sup>-century satyr play by Pratinas of Phlius.<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus claims that it is an attack by the poet on changes in musical practice that were happening in his own time, and several modern scholars have used the fragment as evidence about the rapid transformation of the musical landscape that took place in the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The theme of my argument was that there are no good reasons for supposing that it was designed as a comment of any sort on contemporary musical developments, and several cogent reasons for thinking that it was not. If I was right about that, the passage gives us no information about musical history at all, or at least no information of the sort that it has often been thought to provide.

I am not going to examine the Pratinas fragment again here; but the point can be brought out equally well by looking at Athenaeus' treatment of two other

<sup>1</sup> Ath. 617b-f = Pratinas, PMG 708.



poetic passages which he quotes immediately before it, in the context of the same discussion (616e-617b). The passages are quoted from dithyrambs by two well-known composers of the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Melanippides and Telestes, both of whom composed in the elaborate and supposedly revolutionary style which we call the 'New Music'. Melanippides, the earlier of the two composers, relates the familiar episode in which Athena, after inventing the auloi, threw them away in disgust when she noticed how playing them distorted her pretty face. His dithyramb, which was called *Marsyas* (PMG 758), must have gone on to recall how the satyr Marsyas found the discarded instruments and taught himself to play them. It probably culminated in the tale of his foolish decision to challenge Apollo to a musical competition, with its inevitably disastrous consequences. Telestes tells a different version of the story, however, which rejects the idea that Athena threw the auloi away, 'to be a glory for Marsyas, that handclapping creature born of a nymph'. This, he says, is 'an empty story, unfit for choruses, told by musicians who talk nonsense, a story that has flown to Greece as an envious insult to a clever human art' (PMG 805). What she really did, according to Telestes' version of the legend, was to pass the instruments on to Dionysus for his own use.

Now the speaker in Athenaeus' dialogue introduces the quotation from Melanippides by saying that he is pouring ridicule on the art of aulos-playing; and a second speaker introduces the passage from Telestes with the statement that it was intended as an attack on the position adopted by Melanippides. Commentators in the modern era have frequently developed these contentions into the thesis that these passages were contributions to a vigorous controversy in late 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athens about the status of the aulos and its music, in which conservative critics regularly attacked it and assigned much greater value to music for stringed instruments such as the lyre and the kithara.<sup>1</sup> As I said in an earlier chapter, the development of intricate music for skilful aulos-players was often held to be at the root of the new musical style which these critics so heartily detested. Plato's Socrates rejects the aulos altogether in the *Republic*, adding that they will not be doing anything unusual 'in judging Apollo and his instruments to be superior to Marsyas and his' (*Resp.* 399d-e).

We can be reasonably sure that such controversies existed. We can also agree that when Telestes said that the legend of Athena throwing the auloi away was 'an empty story, unfit for choruses, told by musicians who talk nonsense,' Melanippides may have been one of the misguided musicians he had in mind. But that isn't an inescapable conclusion. The story was traditional and well known, and in rejecting it Telestes need not have been attacking any particular person among the many who had narrated it. It's interesting that he says that it had 'flown to Greece', apparently implying that it had originated somewhere outside the Greek world; and this can hardly be directed against Melanippides, who came from the thoroughly Greek island of Melos. We should notice, too, that stories in which Athena did not discard the auloi were already current long before the time of Tel-

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Wilson (2004), 274-77.

estes, and before we hear of any arguments about the relative merits of the aulos and the kithara. In Pindar's *Twelfth Pythian*, composed eighty or ninety years before Telestes was at work, the goddess gives the art of aulos-playing to human musicians, along with the dramatic piece of aulos music she has composed, for them to use in their musical contests. There may, then, have been a sort of rivalry between the various versions of the legend, and this rivalry may have run its course quite independently of the issues about instruments that arose in the latter part of the century.

In any case it is most unlikely that Melanippides, a composer of 'New Music' inspired by developments in performance techniques on the aulos, was deliberately trying to undermine the status of this instrument and its music. He was best known as a composer of dithyrambs, of which the *Marsyas* was an example, in which the aulos was the accompanying instrument. Aristotle reports, in fact, that it was Melanippides who introduced the instrumental interludes called *anabolai* into the dithyramb, thereby giving the aulos an even more prominent role in these performances than it had enjoyed before (*Rhet.* 1409b). In his works a dithyramb was no longer a choral performance made up of strophes and antistrophes sung to an instrumental accompaniment. Strophic responsion was abandoned, and – as Martin West puts it – it was now 'through-composed, consisting of a series of sung sections punctuated by passages for aulos alone'.<sup>1</sup> John Boardman, followed by Eric Csapo and others, argued that it was in the dithyramb quoted here, the *Marsyas*, that Melanippides introduced these innovations.<sup>2</sup> That is a very plausible hypothesis, but whether we accept it or not, it's unbelievable that a composer of this sort should have used one of his dithyrambs as a vehicle for a deliberate assault on the credentials of the aulos – the very instrument whose musical capacities were so extensively displayed in the dithyramb itself. I conclude, then, that Athenaeus' introductory remarks are misleading, and that modern scholars who link the two passages with contemporary debates about the aulos are almost certainly wrong.

Let us move on now to a related but rather different set of issues. A great deal of the information we have about the so-called 'New Music' comes from comic drama. We find dozens of allusions to it in works of that sort, not only in the surviving plays and fragments of Aristophanes, but also in an extensive body of fragments from plays by other writers of Old Comedy and Middle Comedy in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 4<sup>th</sup>. In most cases the *avant garde* composers – Phrynis, Melanippides, Cinesias, Timotheus, Philoxenus and others – are subjected to merciless mockery; but I shall begin with a fragment which seems to present a different view.

It comes from a comedy by Antiphanes, a prolific dramatist whose career began around 385 BC and must have lasted for several decades. We have the titles of 134 of his comedies (ancient estimates of the total number range between 260 and 365), and over 300 fragments. The fragment I want to glance at here is quoted from the comedy called *Tritagonistēs*, 'The Third Actor'. It runs as follows:

<sup>1</sup> West (1992), 358.

<sup>2</sup> Boardman (1956), 19; Csapo (2004), 213.







When the great poet is finally revealed, wheeled round into view on the *ekkyklēma*, his appearance is absurdly fantastical; he is dressed in woman's clothes, and has surrounded himself with a bizarre selection of objects, some appropriate to a man and some to a woman. He hums a few notes as a preparation for singing, which an old and vulgar relative of Euripides called Mnesilochus compares to the intricate pathways of scurrying ants; and he then proceeds to sing a thirty-line excerpt from the tragedy he is composing. It is made up of four short stanzas to be sung by an actor, each followed by a stanza for the chorus, and Agathon takes both roles. When he has finished, Mnesilochus exclaims at the sweetness and womanishness and sexiness of his songs; their seductive tickling, he says, has penetrated right through his arse-hole. When he asks Agathon to explain why he is dressed as a woman and has this strange and sexually ambiguous collection of objects around him, the poet explains that he is composing a tragedy in which women play a major part, and has dressed himself in women's clothes to get himself into the right frame of mind; and he adds that a poet must make himself beautiful if he is to compose beautiful verse.

The whole episode presents Agathon as a ridiculous fop, and his music and poetry as the product of intricate craftsmanship, highly polished, smooth, fluid, feminine and seductive, but essentially meaningless and ultimately absurd – very much, in fact, like the speech put into his mouth in Plato's *Symposium* (194e-197e), an elegantly exaggerated masterpiece of literary artifice with next to no significant content. But can we trust its picture of his poetic and musical output? It does not seem to fit the collection we have of fragments from his plays – though admittedly they are all quite short and we have only a small number of them, fewer than fifty lines altogether, and almost all of them are in the iambic trimeters of dialogue, not from his lyrics. But so far as their evidence goes, there is nothing very elegant about his diction; the vocabulary is dull, and the verse-construction is pedestrian and monotonous. Almost every line is end-stopped. The only obvious sign of literary artifice is Agathon's fondness for the rhetorical antitheses popularised by the sophist Gorgias, such as *τέχνη τύχην ἑστερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην*, 'skill favours fortune and fortune favours skill' (TrGF 39 F 6), or *εἰ μὲν φράσω τἀληθές, οὐχὶ σ' εὐφρανῶ / εἰ δ' εὐφρανῶ τί σ', οὐχὶ τἀληθές φράσω*, 'If I speak the truth I shall not please you, but if I please you I shall not tell the truth' (F 12). Verses like these may show us why the servant describes Agathon as 'hammering out maxims', and they suggest that there was nothing very original about the ideas he expressed, but they don't confirm any other features of the picture that Aristophanes presents.

We have a few comments on his music by other authors. Some of them are at least consistent with Aristophanes' portrayal. According to Plutarch, he was the first composer to use the chromatic genus of melody in his tragedies (*Quaest. conv.* 645e), which implies a certain refinement of emotional expression; and Aristotle tells us that he introduced songs that were mere *ἐμβόλιμα*, 'interludes', which had nothing to do with the plot or the themes of the play (*Poet.* 1456a 30), suggesting, perhaps, that he had no real interest in the content of his tragedies.

That would fit well with the impression that his work was a hollow shell, highly polished on the outside but empty of serious ideas.

The Byzantine scholar Michael Psellus, on the other hand (who is of course a very late author, but seems often to have had access to respectable sources), states that Agathon introduced into tragedy the systems of attunement called Hypodorian and Hypophrygian (*De trag.* 5); and the characters of these *harmoniai*, according to the writer of a passage in the Aristotelian *Problēmata*, are not at all like the ones we would expect on the basis of the *Thesmophoriazousae*. The Hypodorian, he says, is 'magnificent and stately', and the main characteristic of Hypophrygian music is that it stirs us into action; it is therefore used, for example, when soldiers are marching to battle or warriors are putting on their armour ([Ar.] *Pr.* 19. 48). A passage in Athenaeus, connected with some statements by Heraclides, associates the Hypodorian with boldness, boisterousness and heavy drinking. If we are guided by these remarks, it will be obvious that the Hypodorian and Hypophrygian *harmoniai* would have been completely out of place in the music of the effeminate aesthete depicted in Aristophanes' play. We should at least hesitate to commit ourselves to assertions about Agathon's music for which this comedy is the only evidence.

Perhaps we can go a step further. I think we can regard it as an established fact that Agathon had been a very beautiful boy, that as a young man he retained a quasi-feminine elegance, that he was proud of his good looks and that he had a reputation for sexual deviance; all these features reappear in Plato, in the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium*. Perhaps we ought therefore to allow for the possibility that Aristophanes designed his descriptions of Agathon's music and poetry to fit the notorious public profile of the man himself, regardless of what his compositions were really like. Even if the audience knew that the picture was misleading, they would surely have enjoyed the joke; perhaps they would have enjoyed it all the more because it clearly distorted the facts. All this is speculation, of course, but it is because Aristophanes' evidence leaves room for such speculations that we should not draw historical inferences from it without a good deal of caution.

The case of Euripides in the *Frogs* is rather different. Here we have a long, inventive and very entertaining passage in which Euripides and Aeschylus compete with one another, each criticizing the other's poetry and music and advertising the excellences of their own (*Aristoph. Ran.* 830-1478). Both of them are dead, and the contest takes place in the realm of Hades. It is judged by the god Dionysus, the god under whose auspices the dramatic festivals were conducted; and the prize for the winner is that Dionysus will take him back to Athens to save the city from the sad situation into which it has fallen. Aristophanes' portraits of the two poets are of course caricatures, and the framework he gives to the contest is deliberately absurd. But we know much more about the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides than we do about Agathon's, and we can see that despite all the comic exaggerations and distortions, there is a close relation between the opinions expressed by the characters on the stage and opinions about their work that real people might reasonably have adopted. Much of the debate turns on assessments



of verses quoted directly from their plays. In the later stages of the contest, Aeschylus sings a pastiche of Euripidean lyric, running to just over fifty lines (1309-63), most of which is simply a collage of verses taken from Euripides' genuine plays. Aristophanes has stitched them together brilliantly, to hilarious effect, but he has done so in a way that brings out, in an exaggerated form, features that Euripides' poetry and music really displayed. I shall not go further into the details of the contest here, but I believe that there's much to be learned from it about the characteristics of these dramatists' compositions, and still more about the ways in which they were regarded by audiences at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Almost all the musicians who are the targets of Aristophanes' mockery are contemporary composers and performers associated with the style of the 'New Music'. But this isn't enough to show that he disliked their music himself. Almost all the characters who criticize and make fun of them in the comedies are vulgar buffoons, and certainly don't function as the poet's own mouthpieces. It's true that in the *Frogs* Dionysus awards the prize to the old-style composer Aeschylus and not to Euripides, his modernist rival, and one might try to argue that his judgement should be taken seriously, since he is a god. But the 'Dionysus' portrayed in the *Frogs* is by no means a paradigm of divine wisdom or of the sturdy virtues celebrated by Aeschylus. He is a coarse, stupid, lying coward; and when he makes his judgement in Aeschylus' favour, it is not because he beat Euripides in the contest, in which neither of them clearly came out on top. He chooses Aeschylus, so he seems to suggest, just because he likes him, not for any reason to do with his music and poetry (v. 1468). Perhaps we might read this as a comment on the arbitrary and prejudiced decisions of judges at the musical contests in the real world, and particularly in Athens. We should remember, too, that Aeschylus' work is criticized in this play as vigorously and effectively as that of Euripides; and if we abstract the content of the two composers' polemics from the absurdities of the debate in which they are set, and remove their wilder exaggerations, we can see that Euripides' depictions of Aeschylus' work are not far from the mark, and that the criticisms he directs at him are at least no less cogent and persuasive than the ones that Aeschylus directs against Euripides.

More generally, we must remember that the composers who are satirized in the plays were the great musicians of their day, and their success demonstrates their popularity. Aristophanes himself was a first-rate, very popular composer. Ancient writers tell us little about his music, but it cannot have been perceived as old-fashioned and out of date. It is also clear that he had made a thorough study of compositions in the new musical style, and knew how to compose convincing pastiches of them – not only in a way that gave a general impression of contorted diction, loose rhythmic disorganization, harmonic complexity and so on, but also in ways that captured the special peculiarities of individual composers, such as Euripides in *Frogs*, Agathon in *Thesmophoriazousae*, Cinesias and others in *Birds*. He understood what they were doing, and we may guess that he thoroughly appreciated it. We needn't assume that he chose them as targets for mockery because he disapproved of them, any more than we need to assume

that he disapproved of Socrates just because he makes fun of him in *Clouds*. Like the politicians and celebrities satirized by modern comedians, these people were fair game for the comic dramatists simply because they were prominent public figures, and mockery of them could be guaranteed to make the audiences laugh, even if in fact they commanded general respect. Further, when stupid characters in the plays mock them, we are surely expected to laugh at the speakers themselves, as well as at the jokes they make at the expense of the eminent musicians, philosophers or politicians.

In the *Frogs*, we are presented with a sharply polarised distinction between two musical styles, one old and one new. Dionysus has to choose between them; there is no possibility of a compromise, no composer who bridges the gap between them and whose work includes the best features of both. We might of course dismiss this as a simplification adopted merely for dramatic effect, but in fact it is symptomatic of a serious problem that students of Greek musical history need to consider, though they rather seldom do. The great majority of Greek writers, both in the classical period and in later times, make the same clear-cut dichotomy between the two styles of 5<sup>th</sup>-century composition, giving the impression that they were radically opposed to one another and that there was no connection between them, no smooth historical development from the earlier to the later, and no intermediate forms of composition that incorporated elements of both styles.

The situation is slightly more complex in the rare cases where 4<sup>th</sup>-century music is also taken into account. As we saw earlier in this chapter, someone in a comedy by Antiphanes contrasts compositions being produced in his own time with those of the 'New Music' composer Philoxenus, who by now is dead. The speaker does not say that these contemporary works have reverted to the ancient style; what he says is that they are dull, uninspired and unoriginal, little more than collages of tunes by other composers. A remark in Chapter 21 of the *De musica*, perhaps derived from Aristoxenus, seems to refer to music of a similar sort when it mentions 'singers to the kithara who reject the style of Timotheus, and have virtually abandoned it in favour of καττύματα ["patchwork pieces"] and the compositions of Polyeidus' (1138b). Recent scholars have generally interpreted these καττύματα as medleys of well known songs or tunes, loosely stitched together with little independent input from the composer.

We saw in an earlier chapter, on the authority of Aristoxenus and others, that the 'ancient' style was not confined to the era before the 'New Music' came on the scene; there were still composers who maintained the older tradition right through the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Thus if we put all the evidence together, we can conclude that some writers identified three compositional styles running along side by side in this period, the ancient style, the style of radical composers like Melanippides, Timotheus and Philoxenus, and the 'patchwork' style attributed to Polyeidus. Most writers, however – Plato, for example, and many others after him – distinguish only the first two, and they also mark a fairly clear chronological boundary between the periods in which they were used. Pindar is commonly treated as the



last composer in the older style, and Phrynis, around the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as the first exponent of the new. We rarely come across any suggestion that the 'New Music' emerged as a natural development of the older style, and that its composers were in fact working within a continuously evolving tradition. In the picture we are given, composers fall into two completely disconnected categories, rather like the 'goodies' and 'baddies' in an old-fashioned movie. Composers in the 'noble and ancient' style are represented as the goodies (wearing white hats), and the baddies (wearing black hats) are Phrynis, Melanippides, Timotheus and their villainous associates.

But this is a very improbable scenario. It's true that we classify composers under headings such as 'Baroque', 'Classical' and 'Romantic', and may sometimes carelessly talk as if each of the styles which we label in this way was sealed off from the others in its own water-tight box. But we know that this is not how musical history works. Some early nineteenth-century composers, Beethoven and Berlioz, for example, were accused in their own time of composing noisy and unintelligible rubbish, and abandoning the 'noble tradition' of their predecessors; but of course they did nothing of the sort. Haydn sings on in Beethoven's musical language, and Berlioz's tone-poems and operas offer more expansive modes of expression to the ghost of Gluck.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the alleged 'musical revolution' in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Greece, it becomes obvious that the picture of an unbridgeable chasm between two phases of musical history is misleading, when we consider the enormous popularity that the supposed revolutionaries enjoyed. Their critics, in fact, use their popularity as a stick to beat them with, accusing them of pandering to the depraved taste of the masses. Clearly they could never have met with this kind of success if their compositions had no detectable affinities with music with which their audiences were already familiar. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1. 4. 2-3), Socrates asks a man called Aristodemus whether there are any people he admires for their artistic skills. Aristodemus says yes, and names those who have most inspired his admiration: Homer in the field of epic poetry, Sophocles in tragedy, Polyclitus in sculpture and Zeuxis in painting, all of whom are thoroughly normal and respectable choices. But the composer he names as the best in the genre of dithyramb is not Lasus or Pindar, as one might expect; it is Melanippides, one of the most prominent composers in the new musical style, who at the dramatic date of Xenophon's conversation was still alive or had only recently died. There's nothing in the text to suggest that Aristodemus' choice is in any way eccentric or perverse; Melanippides composed music which almost everyone in contemporary Athens admired and enjoyed.

Fragments surviving from the poetry of one major representative of the 'New Music', Timotheus, show that he was aware that his compositions were being

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cairns (1999), vol. 1, 235, commenting on the shift from 'Classicism' to 'Romanticism' in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: 'The history of Western music in the early decades of the nineteenth century does not show a disturbance on the scale and of the violence that convulsed poetry and drama. There was no comparable break with the past – there was no need of one. That is rarely how music proceeds. It proceeds from what is there, not by radical rejection of it'.

criticised as outrageous departures from the ancient tradition. He responds to these accusations in two very different ways, perhaps at different stages of his career. At one point he fights back by saying, in effect: 'Yes, I have indeed parted company with the past, and I'm proud of it!'

I do not sing the old songs, for my new ones are better.  
A young Zeus reigns, and it was in ancient times that Cronos was king;  
Away with the ancient Muse! (PMG 796)

Timotheus won his first victory as a kitharode in around 420 BC, and this piece of bravado sounds like the defiant boasting of a young man who is just discovering his powers; there may be a hint of this in his allusion to a 'young Zeus'. It's even possible that the antiquated Cronos stands for the earliest of the musicians usually associated with the 'New Music', Phrynis, whom Timotheus defeated when winning that first victory (PMG 802). But he responds to his critics in a subtler way in the closing lines of his *Persians*, a graphic account of the Battle of Salamis, probably first performed in about 407 BC, of which some 240 lines are preserved on papyrus (PMG 791).

The people I push away from me are the wreckers of the ancient Muse, corrupters of songs, uttering the shrieks of piercing, loud-voiced criers. It was Orpheus, son of Calliope, who first begot the tortoiseshell [i.e. the lyre and its music] in Pieria; then Terpander yoked music to the ten songs – Aeolian Lesbos bore him, as a glory to Antissa. And now Timotheus makes the art of the kithara spring to new life with eleven-struck metres and rhythms, opening the Muses' chambered treasury of abundant songs ...

Here, in the first sentence I've quoted, it is not the musicians of the older tradition whom he despises and rejects, but those who ruin their music, or music of the kind that the earlier composers had produced. He is apparently attacking people who perform old-style music – whether it is that of Simonides and his predecessors or their own, composed in the ancient manner – at a continuous Stentorian fortissimo, by contrast, presumably, with his own more nuanced and expressive mode of delivery. In the sequel it becomes even clearer that he is not dismissing the ancient tradition as an irrelevance in the modern age, as he seemed to do in the other fragment. He places himself in a continuous line of descent, which begins with Orpheus and is then passed on to Terpander and finally to Timotheus. Each of them pioneered developments which gave the art of *kitharōidia* new life, but within an unbroken tradition into which Timotheus assimilates himself. The tradition is not something static but something that changes and grows, to which Timotheus has now made the most recent contributions. Of course this is a piece of poetic rhetoric, not a sober statement of historical fact, and in any case it mentions only a few landmarks in several centuries of musical activity. But it is a gesture at the kind of defence he could probably have offered in much more detail, if it became necessary, as a response to the critics who claimed that his music had lost all contact with the past. I think it likely that he could have made out a very persuasive case.

Traces of the missing continuities do exist in our sources, but most of them are shadowy and vague. All these radical composers had teachers from whom they



learned their trade, and the teachers inevitably based the training they gave on the conventions of an earlier generation. As Aristoxenus demonstrates in Chapter 31 of the *De musica*, the continuing influence of a composer's early training should not be underestimated. The dithyrambist Melanippides came from a family of musicians, each of whom will have trained his sons, as was common in the Greek world. According to the *Suda*, his father, Criton, was a λυρικός, a composer in the lyric tradition, and his grandfather – also called Melanippides – composed in several different genres, including the dithyramb. The *Marmor Parium* records that the older Melanippides won a victory in Athens early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The *Suda* also reports that the later Melanippides, in his turn, bought the young Philoxenus as a slave and gave him his education (this may be a legend, but if so it is a perfectly plausible one). Meles, the father of Cinesias, was another musician, a *kitharōidos* – though Plato's Socrates asserts in the *Gorgias* (501e) that he was a very bad one. A scholiast on Aristophanes' *Clouds* describes Phrynīs' teacher, Aristoclitus, as a descendant of Terpander (τὸ γένος ἦν ἀπὸ Τερπάνδρου). Given the regularity with which the musical profession was passed on in families through the generations, it hardly matters whether the statement is intended literally, or means only that he was a musician in the tradition that Terpander had established.

Even the Plutarchan *De musica* lets slip at least one hint that the new-style composers were building on earlier foundations. It tells us in Chapter 4 – presumably ventriloquising Heraclides – that Timotheus sang his first *nomoi* ἐν ἑπεσι, 'in epic hexameters', as Terpander and his successors had done. We should be sceptical about the additional comment that he did so 'in order not to show immediately that he was violating the norms of ancient music'. The point is rather that since these were his earliest *nomoi*, he was probably still heavily dependent on what he had learned during his apprenticeship, and his style had not yet developed very far in the direction that it did later in his career.

We may also note a pithy remark by Aristotle, which points to another respect in which changes in musical style developed gradually during the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and did not appear suddenly all at once in the work of Phrynīs. 'If there had been no Timotheus,' he says, 'we would lack a great deal of μελοποιία; but if there had been no Phrynīs, there would have been no Timotheus' (*Metaph.* 993b). His statement does not imply that Phrynīs was Timotheus' teacher; what it indicates is that Timotheus was familiar with the older composer's work, and took it as a starting-point from which he could launch out in new directions. I find it interesting that when Aristotle mentions what would have been lost if Timotheus had not existed, the items which he says we would lack are not μέλη πολλὰ, 'many songs', but πολλὴν μελοποιῶν, literally 'much melodic composition'. It's at least possible that he means to refer to Timotheus' unique compositional style, and not just to the large number of pieces he composed. It is a style based on that of Phrynīs, but developing it into something new and different.

There are other indications of some writers' recognition that there was no moment in time when the 'New Music' leaped, like Athena, fully armed from the head of Phrynīs or anyone else. Each composer contributed new ideas of his

own, just as the archaic composers had done; as we saw earlier, for instance, it was Melanippides who introduced the instrumental interludes called ἀναβολαί into his dithyrambs, and Agathon who first inserted songs with no bearing on the plot into his tragedies. In a very famous passage from Pherecrates' comedy *Chiron* – fr. 155 K-A, a crucial source for all discussions of the 'New Music' – we can detect an attempt to draw distinctions between the forms of outrageous behaviour attributed to the various composers it names, Melanippides, Cinesias, Phrynīs and Timotheus. Of course we shouldn't take it too seriously. Moreover, the terms in which it depicts the musical crimes of which each of them is accused make it hard to be sure exactly what they were. The speaker is Mousikē herself, who appears on the stage battered and bruised and dressed in torn rags. She describes how she has been beaten up and repeatedly raped by each of these ruffians. We have to work out, from her catalogue of these horrors, the nature of the musical abominations to which the various kinds of sexual violence correspond. It isn't easy, and we can never be sure that we've got it right. But it is at least clear that Mousikē characterises each of them differently; and no doubt Pherecrates expected the audience to recognise quite easily how each individual kind of sexual perversion corresponded to characteristic features of each composer's musical style.

The *De musica* contains other hints that the 'musical revolution' did not suddenly appear out of nowhere. Despite its insistence that the 'noble style' was maintained right through the archaic period, it also repeatedly draws attention to new elements introduced into it by a succession of composers from Terpander and Olympus onwards. Allusions to these evolutionary episodes are scattered through the dialogue; there is a generalised sketch of several composers' novel contributions in Chapter 12, and much more of a similar sort in Chapters 28–29. At the end of Chapter 29 we also find a striking remark about Lasus, who by all accounts is a major figure in the musical tradition.

Lasus of Hermione, by altering the rhythms for the movement of the dithyramb, and by taking his lead from the multiplicity of the notes of the aulos (and thus using more notes, widely scattered about), led the pre-existing music off in a new direction (εἰς μετάθεσιν ἤγαγεν) (1141c).

Lasus' work dates from the last decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, fifty years or so before any composers whom the critics treat as rebels against the older kind of music. The author's final remark, literally that he led this music 'into a change of position', seems to mean that the changes were quite radically new, marking a dislocation in the tradition; and modern scholars have often treated Lasus' innovations as significant precursors of the 'New Music'. They are probably right. The dithyramb seems to have been a genre which gave plenty of scope for musical experimentation. If we can trust the statements about Arion transmitted by Herodotus and others, it first became an organized element in public music-making in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. The rhythmic and melodic modifications attributed to Lasus must have appeared around 500 BC; and they were apparently followed, some thirty years later, by the further transformation



of which Pindar boasts in a dithyramb of his own (fr. 70b Snell-Maehler). He rides the older type of dithyramb and advertises the merits of his novel and much more exciting variety, in terms that would not seem out of place in the mouth of Timotheus. Melanippides and his dithyrambic novelties come two or three decades after that, followed in turn by three other notorious dithyrambists, first Cinesias, then Telestes and finally Philoxenus.

So it looks as if the music of the dithyramb was being continuously transformed all the way through the 5<sup>th</sup> century and into the 4<sup>th</sup>. But this is not a picture that is deliberately presented by any of our sources. We have to infer it from hints and scraps of information, and details are scanty. Recent scholars have speculated about the ways in which developments in the dithyramb influenced innovative composers in other genres, Phrynīs and Timotheus in their kitharodic *nomoi*, for instance, and Euripides and Agathon in their tragedies; but on these matters the amount of direct information provided by the ancient writers is even smaller. It is almost as if there was a conspiracy to exclude the notion of continuous development from comments on 5<sup>th</sup>-century musical history, and to force the facts to fit the unlikely scenario imagined by the comic dramatists and philosophers: a unanimous chorus of old men in white hats facing a rabble of young musical villains in black hats across an unbridgeable chasm. It would be splendid if further research could show us ways of filling in some of the gaps in the record. But in the absence of new light in the darkness, we should at least not allow ourselves to be deceived by what idiots say on the comic stage, or by the prejudices, fictions and rhetorical exaggerations that constitute so much of our so-called 'evidence'.

## 7. Conclusions

OUR explorations in the preceding chapters, as I've already said, amount to no more than preliminary forays into the largely uncharted forests of Greek musical historiography. I have discussed only a small fraction of the relevant texts, and much more remains to be said even about those I have mentioned. But despite these limitations, our survey suggests various conclusions which I think should be taken seriously.

One of them emerges from remarks I made right at the start, though I did not explicitly draw attention to it there. I tried to reduce my topic to manageable proportions by saying that I would concern myself, for the most part, with the writings of Greek musical historians. But in Greek contexts, the concept of a 'musical historian' becomes problematic as soon as we start to examine it. If we restrict the category to authors who regarded themselves as musical historians, or who wrote books or essays devoted entirely to musical history, the boundary that we draw between them and others will turn out to be artificial and arbitrary. We shall be excluding many important writers (political and social historians, for instance, and several of the great Alexandrian scholars) who engaged with music-historical topics from time to time, and whose discussions share prominent features with the writings of the musical historians themselves. It makes no sense to seal the two groups off from one another in separate compartments. If we spread our net too widely, on the other hand, to embrace all writers who purport to be making statements about the music of the past, we shall have to include poets, philosophers, orators, tragic and comic dramatists and others whose primary objectives are in no sense 'historical'. Their task was to delight or amuse an audience, or to use comments about music as persuasive rhetorical or literary devices, and their statements served their purposes in so far as they affected their audience in the appropriate way. Whether the statements were true or not was at best a secondary consideration. In that case, as it seems to me, we should not place their evidence about musical history – such as it is – in the same category as that of the historians and scholars.<sup>1</sup> I do not mean that we should ignore it, but that we need to study and interpret it in different ways, and that it raises problems of different kinds, some of which I have tried to sketch in Chapter 6.

We must also do our best to distinguish genuine historians and responsible scholars from mere compilers, like the writer of the pseudo-Plutarchan *De musica*. If we read texts of the latter sort without due caution, we may receive the impression that we are being told a coherent and authoritative story. In fact, as we have seen, this text in particular is a collage of fragments and paraphrases, borrowed from authors with contrasting views and different methods of research;

<sup>1</sup> We should perhaps make an exception in the case of some, at least, of Aristotle's statements in the *Poetics*, the *Politics* and occasionally elsewhere.



they have been assembled without regard to consistency, carelessly abbreviated, sometimes (so it seems) inaccurately paraphrased, and sometimes wrenched from the contexts in which they might have made sense. In certain passages (notably in Chapters 7-8) much of the material used by the compiler seems irrelevant, in the form in which he presents it, to the topic he purports to be discussing, in this case the auletic *nomoi*; and if the sources from whom he took it did indeed include it in their treatments of this topic, he has eliminated almost everything in their accounts that would have made its relevance clear. In short, the compiler does not critically assess his source materials and then use them as the basis for a suitably cautious reconstruction of musical history. The part of his work that we have examined is more like a few pages from a scrap-book, loosely organized under headings such as 'kitharodic *nomoi*', 'aulodic *nomoi*', 'rhythms', 'the institution of festivals', and so on, into which he has pasted a haphazard selection of excerpts more or less relevant to the themes in question. Whatever we may think of the writers on whom he has drawn, we should not give any weight to the picture of musical history, in so far as there is one, which is conveyed by his way of patching his materials together. He should not, in fact, be regarded as a 'musical historian'.

Athenaeus, in a sense, is another compiler, but despite the playfulness and the ramshackle structure of his sprawling work it has scholarly virtues which are obtrusively missing from the *De musica*. He does not even pretend to be writing musical history, if that involves the construction of a narrative which links musicians, musical episodes, stylistic developments and so on in chronological order. His banqueters' conversation is focused around topics such as instruments, folk songs, dances and the like, and even within each of those limited contexts it makes no attempt to outline the successive stages of a historical process. But because the conversationalists are eager to show off their cultural erudition, they almost invariably parade in front of us the evidence on which their own views are based, citing authors by name, often mentioning also the work from which their citations are taken and frequently quoting the relevant passages verbatim. They not only take pride in their own learning; they are also keen to contradict and compete with one another. This device allows Athenaeus to bring out conflicts between the sources on which each of them draws, and in most cases he does nothing to resolve them, either in his own person or through the intervention of a character to whom his fiction ascribes ultimate authority. We may judge that he recognises, as more optimistic writers do not, that there are many questions about the music of classical and archaic times which – given the state of the evidence – we should frankly admit are unanswerable. In this respect at least, I suggest, scholars in our own time should be readier to follow his example than they commonly are.

We have seen, on the other hand, that he sometimes allows his characters to draw historical inferences which cannot be justified on the basis of the passages they quote, and yet they are not challenged by any of the other speakers; obvious examples are the comments on Pratinas and on Melanippides and Telestes which

I mentioned in Chapter 6. In these cases, so far as we can tell, the interpretations of ancient texts which Athenaeus puts into his speakers' mouths are ones that he has devised himself. He gives no indication that he has borrowed them from earlier authorities. Nor does he say anything to suggest that he has cited only part of the evidence that supports his interpretation; to all appearances it is based on his reading of the passages quoted, and on nothing else. In short, given the temporal and cultural distance between his time and that of the poets he discusses, he seems to be no better equipped to draw historical conclusions from the evidence than we are ourselves. Much the same is true, as we have seen, of a good many of the scholars and historians of the Hellenistic period.

In such cases we might conclude that the only elements in these writers' work on which modern students of musical history can safely rely are the fragments of classical and archaic texts which they offer as evidence for their opinions. But if we rigorously restrict ourselves to material of that sort we shall be jettisoning an enormous amount of apparently valuable information that Hellenistic and later writers offer, much of which is presented without being supported by citations of ancient texts, and with no indication of the sources from which it came. We would have to abandon, for instance, Dicaearchus' observations about *skolia* in the classical symposium (as retailed by Artemon, if I am right about that), and Artemon's own detailed discussion of the *tripous* of Pythagoras of Zacynthus, not to mention many other interesting and substantial passages in Athenaeus, Plutarch, pseudo-Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Strabo, Diodorus of Sicily and any number of other writers. It seems much too heavy a price to pay. In some cases we can make informed guesses about the sources on which these writers were relying, or see that their assertions fit smoothly together with other pieces of well-established historical data, and we can judge the value of their accounts accordingly. In others we cannot, and as responsible scholars we are bound to treat what they tell us with great caution. On the other hand we should recognise that statements by writers of the sort I am treating as 'musical historians' are rarely (if ever) complete fabrications, pure fictions deliberately designed to deceive. The historians may have interpreted their evidence ineptly, reached misleading conclusions by reading only an unrepresentative selection of texts, introduced distortions as a consequence of ideological or other commitments and prejudices, or unwittingly falsified the record in other ways. But at least as a general rule we can be confident that they believed what they said, and that they did so for reasons that struck them as persuasive, even though they do not tell us what they are.

The problematic and fragmentary nature of our evidence makes it inevitable that there will always be uncertainties about many aspects of Greek musical history. Much of it, in fact, is bound to remain completely inaccessible to modern scholars. That does not mean that we can make no progress, however, and we can legitimately be pleased with the small successes that may come our way; but we should have the humility to admit that there is a great deal we do not and cannot know, and the honesty, when we write, to distinguish established facts from more or less plausible hypotheses.



Enough of this ponderous moralising! Except in Chapter 6, my main focus in this book has not been on the problems we face when we try to reconstruct the history of Greek music, but on the ways in which the Greek musical historians went about their business. Of course the two topics are intimately connected, and without an adequate understanding of the Greek historians' methods, prejudices, ideological commitments and so on, our studies of musical history itself will be even less adequate than they are bound to be anyway. But from that point of view, the issues I have sketched out and exemplified in the first five chapters have a bearing on only one of the diverse types of evidence that modern historians of Greek music have at their disposal, which include – among other things – many types of written text about which I have said nothing, the remnants of musical instruments and other relevant items unearthed by archaeologists, musical scenes depicted in paintings and sculptures, our small but still growing corpus of notated scores, and the insights offered by comparisons with other musical cultures.

In that perspective the study of Greek musical historiography is a useful adjunct to a contemporary historian's tool-kit, but I do not want to exaggerate its importance. I would prefer to treat it as an interesting and worthwhile subject in its own right, regardless of the extent to which it can help to guide our work in other domains. It is hampered, of course, by the fragmentary state in which most music-historical writings have come down to us; where we have nothing beyond book-titles and occasional snippets of quotation we cannot say much about the authors' approach to their topics. But even book-titles, especially when we have a substantial number of roughly contemporary specimens, can at least tell us something about the subjects which attracted the historians' interest in the period in question. (We should be alert, however, to the fact that such works included comments on issues which seem to have little or no connection with the matters indicated by their titles, as for instance in the statements about the *magadis* in Euphorion's *On the Isthmian Festival*, or about folk songs in the Aristotelian *Constitution of Colophon* and Nymphis' history of Bithynian Heraclea.) Brief quotations, too, can sometimes be analyzed to bring out features of the way in which the author interprets and uses the evidence on which he apparently or explicitly relies; and sometimes, where several writers' opinions on a given topic are recorded, we may be able to reconstruct in outline the dynamics of an ongoing debate. But the amount of historiographical information we can safely extract from material of this sort is obviously limited.

Where we have a larger amount of text at our disposal – even if it too is fragmentary or survives only in paraphrase – we can raise a much wider range of questions with a reasonable hope of discovering answers, as I have tried to show in my remarks about Glaucus, Heraclides and Aristoxenus. Those authors wrote works devoted specifically to music, but much the same applies to other historians who did not. If a writer's main topic is not musical but political history, for instance, but includes occasional passages on musical practices, we may be able to draw inferences about his conception of the role of music in political society;

and we may also be able to see how his methods, presuppositions, prejudices and purposes as a political historian have affected the way in which he represents aspects of the musical past.

Among the authors who devoted works specifically to the music of the past, and whose work survives in reasonable quantities, the two writers on whose work the *De musica* draws most heavily, Heraclides and Aristoxenus, together with Glaucus in his occasional but important contributions, are also the closest in time to the phases of musical history that they discuss. This gives them a special status among our sources. But when they are writing about the music of the archaic period, as in much of the material cited in the *De musica*, the temporal gap between them and their subjects remains large. In these circumstances, questions about the kinds of evidence they relied on and how they used it become particularly interesting; so too do questions about the extent to which they have allowed their interpretation of archaic musical history to be coloured by the political and philosophical ideologies of the late 5<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, or by their adherence to one side or the other in musical controversies that were current in their own time, but had not been dreamed of a hundred years before. Where we can see that the answers to these and similar questions differ from one writer to another, we may be able to use the fact to explain at least some of the rather frequent conflicts between their historical accounts.

In the earlier chapters of this book I tried to show that we have enough information about these three writers, and a handful of others, to support defensible answers to questions of these sorts. I shall not try to recapitulate them now. I should emphasize, however, that 'defensible', as I use the term, does not mean 'demonstrably true'. The conclusions I have reached have respectable arguments in their favour (or so I believe), though often my exposition of the arguments has been sketchy; but they remain open to criticism and revision. In the cases of Aristoxenus and Heraclides, in particular, I have focused my discussions rather narrowly on quite small samples of their writings. They are writers from whose works we have a fairly substantial corpus of fragments, and about whose intellectual contexts we know a good deal; and studies which draw more widely on the available evidence could surely shed additional light on the issues.

The study of Greek music and musical thought has made great progress in recent decades, and has aroused an unprecedented amount of interest. Many – though unfortunately not all – of the scholars who have tackled the subject have carefully investigated the character and assessed the credentials of the ancient writings on which their discussions depend. But this has typically been done in a piecemeal way, as each text becomes relevant to a scholar's project. It seems to me that it is time for a more systematic strategy, which would bring large groups of musically significant writings together – perhaps classifying them under headings such as 'poetry', 'philosophy', 'oratory' and others as well as 'history'. It would then turn the spotlight on their literary, ideological and more generally methodological features, in so far as they affect the manner in which music, musicians, musical history and so on are represented in them, and the ways in which



questions bearing on musical topics are addressed. I suspect that it is a task for a team of researchers, rather than a single individual. But in any case it would be a thoroughly absorbing and rewarding project, and – if it were done well – a very valuable one. I hope that my small attempts in this book will spark some interest in the possibilities of such work.

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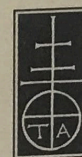
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